St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthagena, Ohio

$2.00

November 18, 1994

COMMONWEAL

GABE HUCK
Rome speaks: Inclusive language verboten

ROBERT P. IMBELLI
A Vatican II community

RICHARD ALLEVA on 'Pulp Fiction'

Last Words: WILLIAM P. CLANCY and DOROTHY DAY

BOOKS

GEORGE MARSDEN on David O'Brien & the Catholic identity of Catholic colleges

ROBERT G. HOYT on John Leo

MARY LEE FREEMAN
Catholics without a Catholic church

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON on John Meier & the historical Jesus

DISSENT & COMMUNION
Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

MY PATRON, THOMAS THE DOUBTER
Paul Elie

'COMMONWEAL' & THE 'CATHOLIC WORKER'
Patrick Jordan

CADES OF REWARDING STRUGGLE
Edward S. Skillin

**********3-DIGIT 458
CW 00079972 9422
ST CHARLES LIBRARY
ST CHARLES SEMINARY
2860 US ROUTE 127
CARTHAGENA OH 45822-9591

0 74470

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Poisonous forgetting

Stuttgart, Germany

To the Editors: I found David R. Carlin, Jr.'s article on the working class [October 7] both perceptive and troubling. As more and more of our fellow human beings throughout the world are forgotten in an economic "kingdom of the damned," where even the most basic human needs are not met, one cannot help wondering about the future judgment of God on those of us who are doing the forgetting. Perhaps Carlin has sounded a wake-up call.

MICHAEL P. CHEW

Job openings near top?

San Francisco, Calif.

To the Editors: With respect to the recent discussion in your pages of women's ordination, a suggestion voiced on October 10 at the synod in Rome, in the presence of Pope John Paul II, to the effect that women might some day be named "lay cardinals," offers grist for thought. The suggestion came from African Bishop Ernest Kombo of Owando.

The pope's apostolic letter of May 22 reaffirming the position that the church does not have the authority to confer priestly ordination on women was followed on July 13 by his strong statement: "The Catholic church needs the gifts and talents of women, not only for handing on the faith and caring for the sick, but also as consultants at all levels."

Since it appears unlikely that we will ever see an apostolic letter claiming that the church does not consider herself authorized to confer the cardinalate on women, and since the church does indeed need to make use of women's gifts, why is not some serious effort being exerted toward redressing what many consider an obviously sexist ecclesiastical "tradition," the all-male College of Cardinals?

The cardinalate is not an evangelical category and does not of its nature require ordination as a prerequisite. Historically, the last cardinal who was not a priest was Giacomo Antonelli (1806–76), secretary of state to Pius IX. Is it unreasonable to wish that some day there might be women to represent over half of humankind in the pope's council—even to help elect the pope of all? The requirement (since John XXIII) that every cardinal be a bishop need not be a hindrance; the same church that makes the rule can make the exception, as it did, for instance, with Pavan (1983) and De Lubac (1985). In 1489 Giovanni de' Medici (the future Pope Leo X) was made a cardinal at the age of thirteen by Pope Innocent VIII. Obviously the church can make of the cardinalate whatever she (?) wishes.

Some years ago, Msgr. Joseph N. Moody, then president of the American Catholic Historical Association, commented on my first draft of a letter to the editors of *America* which I had shared with him, dealing with the question "Can women be cardinals if they cannot be priests?" Rather than "extremist" or "outrageous," he found it "sober, solidly based on an understanding of history, and interesting as a potential escape from the apparent indifference of the church to the strength of the women's movement." The suggestion, he wrote, should be taken seriously as a means of stimulating thought "in the direction of filling the aspirations of women for a role in the church without changing traditional attitudes toward the priesthood."

From the October appointment of thirty new cardinals, all male, all bishops, it is clear (though not surprising) that Bishop Kombo's proposal did not get through to the pope. I am again reminded of what has been proposed as the Conservative Manifesto: "Nothing must ever be done for the first time."

LARRY N. LORENZONI, S.D.B.

The writer is development director for the San Francisco province of the Salesians of Don Bosco. He formerly served in the Vatican as director of the documentation, information, and press office of Caritas International.

Marx said it first

DeLand, Fla.

To the Editors: I found it amusing to observe David Carlin ["The Withering of the Working Class," October 7] describe the present socio-economic structure of the United States by employing a class analysis, which owes its validity to Karl Marx more than to any other thinker, while prefacing his analysis with a denigration of Marx as not "a social theorist of the first rank." This statement, based on nothing more than the collapse of communism, is about as sensible as saying our Lord was not a religious theorist of the first rank because of the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire.

Of course Marx's views of the world are flawed—especially, for us, his tunnel vision of religion. But as long as there survives an economic system along the lines of *laissez-faire* "liberal capitalism" of the nineteenth-century so-called Manchester school, or the corporate variety of our time, Marx's insights and analyses will remain a healthy corrective, not to say salutary

(Continued on page 42)

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. *Commonweal* articles also are available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional offices. Copyright © 1994 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $39; Canada, $41; foreign, $44. Special two-year rate: U.S. $67; Canada, $71; foreign, $77. Surcharge for air mail delivery to Europe, North Africa, Central or South America, $35 per year; for other parts of the world, $44 per year. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover, p. 26, Antonucci; p.5, Renault, Rothco; p. 9, Punch, Rothco; p. 11, Leung, Rothco; pp. 16, 18, The National Committee to Celebrate Italy; pp. 20, 33, Charlot; p. 24, Corbin; p. 30, Harris, Rothco; pp. 32, 42, Ross, Rothco; p. 36, Hawken, Rothco; p. 38, Matt, Rothco; p. 46, Fritz Eichenberg.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXXI, Number 20

Correspondence: 2
Editorial: 3
Rome speaks: *Gabe Huck* 4
Kinship is forever: *Sidney Callahan* 5
An alienating culture: *John Garvey* 7
Dissent & communion: *Margaret O'Brien Steinfels* 9
Poetry: *Anne Porter* 14, *Dixie Partridge* 28
My patron, Thomas the doubter: *Paul Elie* 16
The Community of Sant'Egidio: *Robert P. Imbelli* 20
'Commonweal' & the 'Catholic Worker': *Patrick Jordan* 24
Six decades of rewarding struggle: *Edward S. Skillin* 26
Screen: *Richard Alleva* 30
Media: *Frank McConnell* 31
Testing the Gospel story: *Luke Timothy Johnson* 33

BOOKS

From the Heart of the American Church, by David J. O'Brien: *George M. Marsden* 36
Two Steps Ahead of the Thought Police, by John Leo: *Robert G. Hoyt* 38
Catholic Lives/Contemporary America, edited by Thomas J. Ferraro: *Mary Lee Freeman* 39
Gender and Discourse, by Deborah Tannen: *Dennis O'Brien* 41
Liberal for the right reasons: *William P. Clancy* 45
Poor for the right reasons: *Dorothy Day* 46

STAFF

Editor: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Managing Editor: Patrick Jordan
Associate Editor: Paul Baumann
Production Editor: Jacqueline Dowdell
Senior Writer: Robert G. Hoyt
Business Manager: Richard Haas
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Design: Emil Antonucci
Staff: Harriette Balsky, Carmen P. Alava, Sandra Smith
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, Me. 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 15 Dutch St. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

Liberals & Catholics

Can Catholics be liberals?—a hefty but appropriate question on our anniversary. Over seven decades, *Commonweal* has identified itself more often than not with American liberalism, which from the New Deal through the New Frontier supported a culturally conservative society along with a political and economic agenda committed to social justice and social welfare. At first this agenda worked to protect the elderly, workers, widows, orphans, the infirm; and over time, voters, consumers, medical patients; and finally, even the air and earth on which our lives depend. That cultural and political/economic equation has shifted at least to the extent that the party of liberalism has become divided on the matter of cultural values: *Roe* v. *Wade* (1973) serves as the symbol of a shift away from family solidarity toward individual rights. The social net and regulatory mechanisms that were the legacies of several Democratic administrations were weakened under Reagan-Bush; and the "New Democrats," at least in electoral campaigns, announce themselves complicit in this strategy.

The fate of liberalism is raised in our church as well: A largely conservative group of Catholic editors in a recent statement, "A Civilization of Love: The Pope's Call to the West," questions the compatibility of the Catholic faith and liberal culture. Though the statement primarily criticizes the neoconservative defense of capitalism and free markets, a commentary by one of its signators, Professor David Schindler, editor of *Communio*, indicts liberalism as a whole: Liberalism "may present a more serious threat to the church, and indeed to authentic human culture, than communism did," he writes. "Communism appealed to power and was explicit about its ideology of (Marxist) materialism. Liberalism... appeals to appetite, but...claims to impose no world view... [providing] material goods in abundance, and says that one is now free to choose.... With these goods...comes a 'way of life': a materialist and consumerist vision of the good life" (*Communio*, Fall 1994).

Liberalism whether of the American or Continental variety, by definition, has never had a philosophically grounded teleology. In a liberal culture, what are the criteria for choosing the good? Is the "good" merely the choice of each individual? A lively debate on this issue surged within liberal circles over the last decade (Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and Its Critics*; William Galston, *Liberal Purposes*; Bruce Douglass et al., *Liberalism and the Good*) without resolving the question. So Schindler is not wrong about liberalism's agnosticism concerning the good. Its tendency to foster extreme individualism is a high price to pay for its considerable freedoms. But we are not yet convinced that it is too high a price. Schindler's critique fastens on liberalism's excesses as fatal flaws likely to bring spiritual death to Eastern Europe, the third world, and ultimately to our own society, as we become irrevocably caught in the web of "a materialist and consumerist vision of the good life." There is much to ponder here, and as regular readers know, *Commonweal* editors,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

columnists, and writers have so pondered. But no more than the philosophers or Schindler do we have a clear answer to how the moral crisis of liberalism will resolve itself on such questions as abortion and euthanasia. How can the human freedom and material well-being wrought by a liberal society be made more socially and communally responsible?

But do "A Civilization of Love" and Schindler's commentary give a fair account of liberalism's virtues? We think not. The Catholic church itself has learned much from liberalism: the virtue of separating church and state; the sinfulness of slavery, which the church defended down through the nineteenth century; the need for a vibrant defense of human dignity, first tutored in liberal societies. Rather than seeing in liberalism's current troubles the "culture of death," shouldn't we Catholics see in them the opportunity to repay a debt by drawing into this project on human freedom our own tradition with its emphasis on the social nature of the human person and the social bonds that bind society together? We have no doubt that modern culture desperately needs such virtues. But, at least for the moment, the countercultural critique authored by conservative Catholics reaches too far while offering little more than integralist rhetoric as a substitute for liberalism's actual moral strengths.

As we said, a hefty question, too hefty to tackle in a single editorial. It is a subject on which we will have more to say in our seventy-first year.

REPORT ON THE LECTIONARY

ROME SPEAKS

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE VERBOTEN

The Vatican has withdrawn the permission it gave just two years ago for use of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV) in the liturgy, including the readings at Sunday Mass. In October, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) said that the NRSV translation was unacceptable for liturgy (and catechetics) because of its use of inclusive language. An unnamed official explained: "If you say 'men and women' [instead of 'man'] you are immediately dividing man into two, which may not be the point. You may want to stress the unity." On the other hand, substituting "humanity" for "man," he explained, "tends to make the text abstract" [CNS]. That means "man" is just right. Right?

Archbishop Geraldo Agnelo, secretary of the Congregation for Worship, which confirmed the use of the NRSV in 1992, now says that that confirmation was "nondefinitive." In explaining this retraction he simply pointed to the superior authority of the CDF. What the CDF said to the Congregation for Worship was not made public. Nor is it entirely clear how or when Archbishop William Keeler (soon-to-be Cardinal Keeler), president of the NCCB/USCC, was informed of the decision. While the Americans thought they were engaged last summer in a discussion of the matter with the Congregation for Worship, in fact the congregation was ordering the demise of the NRSV for Catholic liturgy. Speaking for the bishops' conference, Monsignor Francis Maniscalco characterized the confusion as "nothing more than a bureaucratic mix-up over here."

In its fidelity and literary quality, the NRSV by general agreement is the measure of translations of the Bible into English. It was approved for liturgical use by the U.S. bishops (vote: 195-24) in 1991. Inclusive language in the pages of the NRSV means a moderate and scrupulously scholarly use of gender-inclusive words where the words previously used no longer echo good English usage. Thus its predecessor (RSV) renders Genesis 1:26: "Let us make man in our image." The NRSV reads: "Let us make humankind in our image." "I appeal to you, brethren [RSV]," in 1 Corinthians 1:10 is now rendered "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters [NRSV]."

In a press release responding to the CDF's decision, Cardinal-designate Keeler did not question the decision, the way the decision was made and communicated, or whether the American bishops ought to accept it. Instead, he reported that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the CDF, "kindly" met with him and promised that before the New American Bible (NAB) translation (also approved for liturgical use by the American bishops, also making moderate use of inclusive language) met with a similar fate, there could be some meetings in Rome between members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and bishops and scholars from the United States.

The NAB lectionary has languished in Rome for over two years awaiting confirmation—a routine procedure whereby the decisions of bishops' conferences are "confirmed" by the appropriate curial congregation. Some bishops' conferences make greater use of this process than others; and, as we now see, "confirmations" can be "unconfirmed." What will happen to the NAB? When the translation of the catechism prepared under the very careful direction of Cardinal Bernard Law went to Rome, it never came back. Instead, a "manly" translation was sent in its place; opening line: "God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life."

What is at stake here? Should anybody care? In fact, many parishes try to grapple with the problem of inclusive language in the liturgy by making their own, often awkward and inconsistent, adaptations; or they use translations that have never been submitted to the bishops for any approval; or they turn to the lectionary of the Catholic church in Canada, which does use the NRSV. There are alternatives and our bishops know this. If they allow the matter to end here, many faithful Catholics will shrug at still another instance of episcopal and curial foolishness and do what they want.

If the bishops settle for no NRSV and eventually accept an NAB that has been "catechismized" by Rome, what will have been lost? Here's the start of a list.

1. The integrity of the bishops' conference. This body of bishops said in 1991 that the NRSV was an acceptable translation for liturgical use in their dioceses. They made the judgment

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the inclusive language in the NRSV met the criteria they themselves had established in 1990. The NRSV came to them with the recommendation of their own committees. If the assembled bishops of an area cannot determine what use of their own native language is fitting in the liturgy, then what can they do? If all authority for all decisions about all languages rests not with bishops who speak a given language but with the CDF, what kind of authority do the bishops really have? Will the bishops speak out or keep silent at their November 14 meeting? Will they accept Rome's version of episcopal authority by setting aside the new liturgical texts they are considering for the sacramentary, texts in preparation for a dozen years? Or will they affirm their proper authority?

2. Scholarly respect and ecumenical relations. Since Vatican II, Catholics have been encouraged to use good Scripture translations and, when possible, to use those accepted by other Christian bodies. The NRSV was an ecumenical project, in which Catholic scholars participated, affirmed for its fidelity and its excellence. What does it mean to say that the NRSV—widely used in seminaries and universities as well as many Protestant churches—is not acceptable to Catholics in liturgy and catechesis?

3. Solidarity with the English-speaking world. Most other countries with large numbers of English-speaking Catholics have used, until now, the Jerusalem Bible in the liturgy. Two years ago, the Canadian bishops began to publish their four-volume lectionary using the NRSV. They did not ask Rome for confirmation, nor did they operate in secret; they kept the Congregation for Worship informed. And, of course, when the U.S. bishops received confirmation in 1992, the matter was moot. The Canadians, with such a large investment of time and resources at stake, are likely to find a way to continue using their lectionary. A similar change has been discussed in Australia, England, Scotland, and elsewhere. Will the U.S. bishops stand with Canada and others in affirming the competence of English-speakers to make their own decisions about how their language can best be put at the service of the church at worship?

Finally, this matter raises questions about episcopal trust. The bishops of the United States have grappled with language and with liturgy. They know that all of us are shaped by our rites, including the words of those rites. Bishop Donald Trautman, chair of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, responded with conviction to the news from Rome: "Inclusive language is a necessity in our American idiom and culture today. It is necessary in Scripture, in the liturgy, and in catechetics."

What the bishops have not grappled with so well is their own authority. They sit and wait for the phone to ring. If Rome delays, so be it. If Rome is unhappy, they do as they are told. Does this betray the trust that the people of God place in them?

GABE HUCK

Gabe Huck is director of Liturgy Training Publications of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

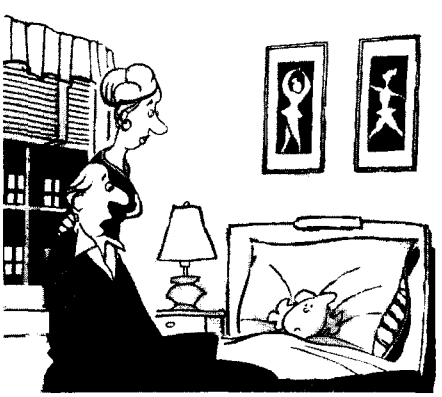
OF SEVERAL MINDS Sidney Callahan

KINSHIP IS FOREVER

THE TIES THAT BIND

Blood may be thicker than water, but do biological genetic ties of kinship really matter that much in the modern world? These thoughts come to mind as Americans become drawn into the media watch of tragic custody struggles, for Baby M., for Baby Jessica, or for Kimberly Mays. When the conflicting claims of biological versus social parents clash, what values are in dispute?

In similar reproductive challenges, other arguments rage over whether third-party egg, womb, and sperm donors should be allowed to remedy infertility problems. Reproductive technologies such as AID (artificial insemination by donor), egg donation, or surrogate mothering are castigated because they break apart the union of genetic, gestational, and social parenting. Yet those who argue for unfettered reproductive technologies and those who represent adoptive parents in contested custody cases, confidently tend to discount genetic or biological ties.



"No, we didn't find you under a cabbage leaf, dear, and the stork didn't bring you. Do you know what a surrogate mother is?"

Elizabeth Bartholet, a law professor and specialist in custody cases, provides an example of a deprecatory view of biological kinship. As reported in the *New York Times*, Bartholet asserts that, "When we value the biologic link, what we're saying is we value parents' property rights over their children." Biology's all about domination and ownership.

Another reductionist explanation of the value placed on the biological ties of birth parents is offered by Joel D. Siegel, the lawyer for Mary Beth Whitehead: "It suggests we're still a traditionalist, conservative society that tries to decide these cases with what we're used to. We're used to biological parents." The implication is that to value biological kinship is to display a retrograde allegiance to the primitive and proprietary norms of the past—and a patriarchal past at that.

In the antibiological perspective, truly meaningful human relationships are formed not by sharing genetic ties but by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

willed and autonomous consent. The highest human capacity is the rational ability to use symbols, to make promises, and to make conscious moral commitments. After all, as everyone recognizes, the culturally created bonds of marriage, adoption, ideological and religious communities can be as robust and intense as any genetic familial bond. So why make such a big deal of the biological connection in reproduction?

Well yes, but it is well to remember that individual human beings can create psychosocial, consensual bonds and autonomous commitments only because they have been genetically selected to inherit the innate brainpower and emotional capacity to produce family loyalties and long-term caretaking. Moreover, these freely willed relationships of informed consent tend to become symbolized by images and metaphors derived from genetic ties. Believers are united in "one family" as "children of God" and live as "brothers and sisters" in the Lord. Married partners become "one flesh." Ideological unions on behalf of a cause are called "brotherhoods," and feminists insist that "sisterhood is powerful." Patriots give their lives for the motherland.

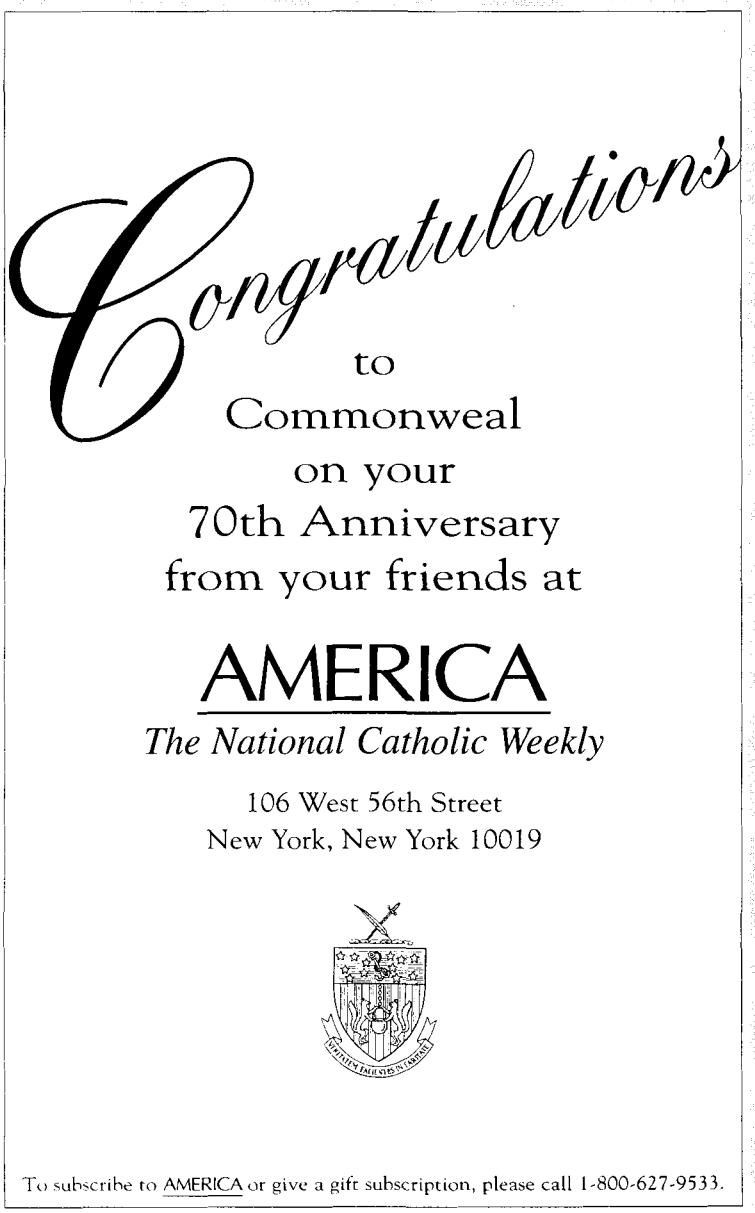
Mother, father, sister, brother, daughter, son—human beings cherish their blood kin for many reasons that have nothing to do with patriarchy, property rights, or the inertia of custom. The biological links in a family create powerful bonds because they are particular, specific, and, most important, irreversible. While one can divorce a spouse, the genetic tie between parent and child or between siblings can never be undone. Am I my brother's keeper? Yes, always.

Moreover, genetic ties can be extended over time and space; they exist despite physical distance or the absence of daily encounters. Grandparents, grandchildren, and more distant progenitors can be part of one's unique family. Even the dead exert influence. Brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins remain one's relatives no matter how far away they live.

Yes, biological relatives are irreversibly our own particular kin and we are stuck with them. But then they are stuck with us as well. You don't earn or achieve your status as a family member, you're born into the fold. These ties of blood kinship produce moral responsibilities that no one contracts for. Family obligations exist prior to other freely chosen allegiances or promises, in the same way we are born into earth's ecosystem without informed consent yet have a moral responsibility to take care of our environment now and for future generations.

When, in turn, we biologically engender a child with a partner, the two parents are equally invested and morally responsible for the child. At the same time, two different family lineages are united and new, extended bonds of biological kinship are created. Each child has two sets of kin to act as backups and additional resources for nurturing and helpful launching into the community. And the social capital provided by biological kin extends through adulthood and into old age. After one's spouse, friends, colleagues, and comrades have died or gone senile, one's descendants remain on the scene to help.

In fact, our immersion in biological kinship prepares us for old age and strength-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ens the obligations that we owe to the old. In the mirror I see my face turning into my father's face with the same wrinkles and deep shadows, while my body slowly begins to resemble my mother's in her advanced old age. Having loved these physical bodies I can better come to terms with my aging bodyself. The physical likeness, which is so undeniable, reminds me that these particular filial obligations cannot be denied. Through my aging parents I begin to empathize with other old people.

As for our children, the genetic tie also becomes more important as they age. (Infants exact worship always and everywhere.) We value our growing children not as personal property or as personal achievements, but partly because they are biologically like us, like one's spouse, and like our other family members. My genes are shared with my parents and siblings, after all, and my biological child shares in these family resemblances. Biological similarities make it easier for me to understand and be attuned to a child of my flesh, akin to me and mine.

The biological link to children is particularly supportive to parents in the crisis time of adolescence. In this trying period of separating and achieving independence, many members of a family might choose to divorce (if not murder) each other if they could. The irreversible biological bond helps hold parents to their task; one's parental authority is augmented when the parent-child tie is irreversibly "just the way it is," courtesy of nature's genetic throw, with no undoing possible. Like it or not, we're all in this family together.

When one's children become adults and move out into their grown-up lives, the family's daily encounters and mutual exchanges lessen. But kinship ties, despite many difficulties, can still operate over a distance to buffer struggles and to enhance celebrations and triumphs. When grown children marry and begin having their own families, the sense of biological kinship becomes renewed by the miracle of grandchildren. The mutual obligations of the flesh are not forgotten.

How foolish it would be to try and run a society which does not respect and cultivate the abiding biological roots of kinship. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

AN ALIENATING CULTURE

NO SENSE OF THE SACRED

I have friends who have decided to teach their children at home. We considered doing this briefly, when our children were young, but thought that they needed the socialization (a word often used against advocates of home schooling) that comes with spending a lot of time with other children, and believed that they needed adult influences other than ours. We sent them to parochial schools, and they survived, as we have until now.

The friends we had who decided in favor of home schooling ranged from left to right politically, but agreed that the consensus to be found in public schools was so damaging that they did not want their children exposed to it. I once thought that this was an exaggerated fear, though we had chosen to send our kids to parochial schools. I'm not sure, now.

Is there a point at which it is a good thing *not* to be socialized into a culture? Your kids may seem odd to their friends if they are not allowed to watch everything they want on television and wander the malls with kids who've been body-pierced. Is that bad? Is this a culture within which you want your children to be at home? It may be better if they feel alien from what surrounds them, not at all at home, since what surrounds them is really a corrupt and dreadful, a death-dealing, empty world. To prepare them for this world, to make them feel at home in it, is a form of child abuse.

When you haven't seen television for

70th ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to

COMMONWEAL

from

New York City's Jesuit University

FORDHAM

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
RELIGION & RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

offering programs in

- Spiritual Direction
- Religious Education
- Pastoral Counseling
- Pastoral Ministries

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
(718) 817-4800

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMING

December 2

Christmas Books

a couple of years and then are exposed to it again, it comes as a terrible shock: it strikes you—literally strikes, in a physical sense—as a lurid, madness-producing thing. It jumps from one demanding and vivid image to another disconnected but demanding image, from piled-up corpses to sitcom previews to carpet sales to sex to laxatives. The effect is not so much a leveling as it is an insane mosaic in which it could be that everything matters or nothing matters at all, but either way everything glitters and shines.

This is the culture that surrounds and defines our children, limited only by what happens when they transgress the other defining thing, the law. There is no other common culture. Television and school and work are the loci of family life, the home being the filling station that provides food, a place to sleep, and the occasional conversation. The deterioration of family life is a fact, not just something Republicans trot out to savage Democrats with. The church and synagogue and (increasingly) the mosque may be places to which parents take themselves and their children once a week, or a few times a month, or a few times every year, but this is often a form of nostalgia. It is what we come from; it isn't what we are. Or we think we can juggle: it is *part* of what we are, the religious part. This is the space we would check if the census demanded it, which it doesn't. It has no real effect on our lives.

At work and school, any spiritual understanding of life is silenced. Your religion is private, personal, not even marginal (because you can see margins). You can act this peculiar way with others who share the interest, but as part of a common understanding, religion is something like foot-fetishism, something embarrassing that might be tolerated in the obsessed person but is ignored in any wider circles, for reasons of politeness.

It could be argued that religion is getting a better press these days, with new attention to the need for core values in public education, but this is a form of civic religion in service to a secular agenda: people don't like their children having to wear bullet-proof vests to school. The real values informing our public schools (and many parochial schools) are essentially secular. There is little or no serious questioning of the premises that move our culture. This questioning should be the beginning of education, especially any education that deals with questions of value and meaning. For Christian parents, an education in the humanities which neglects—indeed, systematically excludes—the central fact that human beings are made in God's image, and that the universe is the place of God's presence, should at least be problematic. Education is finally about how we understand the world: What do we want our children to know? What do we think is so important that our children will be harmed if they are not exposed to it?

Wendell Berry is a poet and essayist who is always worth reading, a solid and careful man whose sense of the world and our place here is genuinely sacramental. So I was intrigued by a reference in a Berry essay to the Orthodox theologian Philip Sherrard and his statement that "Creation is nothing less than the manifestation of God's hidden being." I read Sherrard's *The Eclipse of Man and Nature: An Enquiry into the Origins and Consequences of Modern Science* (Inner Traditions/Lindisfarne Press, 1987), and although Sherrard does not directly address the question of Christian education in his essay, the book's thesis has a direct bearing on the subject.

In his conservative way Sherrard is every bit as radical as Ivan Illich, and it is easy to see why Berry quotes him approvingly. To summarize his argument much too crudely, you could say that Sherrard traces a line of thought from Aquinas through Descartes and the Enlightenment to modern secularism, one which has led to a scientific world view which finally desanctifies nature and dehumanizes all of us. This way of thinking separates reality into the material world of phenomena on the one hand, and the reason which seeks to understand and analyze that world on the other. In criticizing the elimination of the possibility that in addition to rational understanding there is such a thing as an even more authoritative spiritual perception, Sherrard insists that "modern scientific thought has no complexity or depth whatsoever," and makes a strong case for this unfashionable point of view. He argues for a restoration of the understanding that all ideas, even the most materialistic ones, ultimately rest upon metaphysical assumptions.

Finally, he says, our view of reality must be sacramental, which means that

> nature is not something upon which God has acted from without. It is regarded as something through which God expresses himself from within. Nature, or creation (the terms are interchangeable in this context), is perceived as the self-expression of the divine, and the divine is totally present within it....Like Eucharist, nature is a revelation not merely of the truth about God but of God himself. The created world is God's sacrament of himself to himself in his creatures: it is the means whereby he is what he is. Were there no creation, then God would be other than he is; and if creation were not sacramental, then God would not be its creator and there would be no question of a sacrament anywhere. If God is not present in a grain of sand then he is not present in heaven either.

Sherrard does not counsel hopelessness in the face of the nonsacramental world view which currently dominates us; he says that we "demean our own dignity" when we regard a materialistic and manipulative view of the world as final, as something that will inevitably lead to our extinction. If it does, he says, "this is our own responsibility."

The restoration of a sense of the sacred and of the world as the place where God is present is essential to our collective sanity. It has a lot to do with what education—our own self-education, and what we hope to pass on to our children—should be about. Reason is not enough, Sherrard argues. Spiritual, sacramental insight is essential, and an education that does not place it at the center is not worthy of human beings. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DISSENT & COMMUNION

YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER

MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS

My title, "Dissent and Communion," joins two terms that often crop up in churchspeak but don't usually live together, much less marry. As will appear, I think that's regrettable (the marriage part, that is). On the other hand, it's also understandable. Consider these terms as they are usally understood. "Communion" gets kindly treatment in the dictionary. There it speaks of a sharing of thought or feelings, of participation, spiritual fellowship; it can also denote "a body of Christians with a common religious faith who practice the same rites." *Roget's Thesaurus* gets even warmer and fuzzier; "communion" calls up image or ideas of concord, rapport, involvement, communal effort, cooperation, even democracy (!).

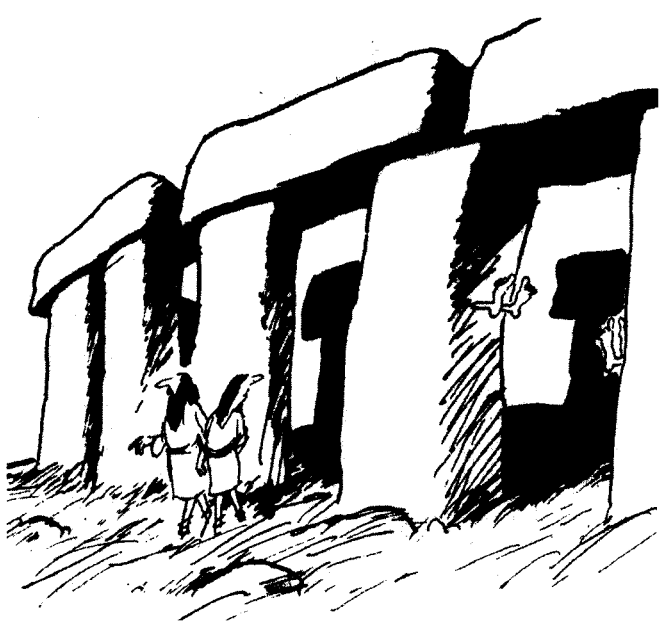
Turn next to "dissent." The dictionary speaks of disagreement, difference of opinion, nonconformity; it's "a refusal to conform to the authority or doctrine of an established church." *Roget's* "disses" the word by relating it to other words with negative resonance, both nouns (discord, disagreement, trouble, mischief, annoyance, nuisance, hassle, strife) and verbs (contest, contradict, oppose). Obviously, it's not only the Vatican that takes a dim view of dissent.

Now let me get technical. Both "dissent" and "communion" have specialized meanings in formal Catholic discourse. In my use here, the word "dissent" means explicit theological expression of views that question or challenge some established Catholic teaching. The position held by many of us Catholics, that *Humanae vitae* and the present pope are tragically mistaken in considering every act of contraceptive sex by married people inherently evil, is dissent. Griping about your pastor's sermon, or refusing to give to Peter's Pence, or not helping the poor may be wrong (indeed, the latter may be a sin!), but none of them is an example of dissent, at least not unless it derives from some doctrinal position about the nature of the church or the Christian's obligations in charity.

"Communion" also takes on different meanings in the theological context. Since Vatican II, there has been a flowering of something called communion ecclesiology, an effort to define and understand the church as communion. It has many formulations: the church as community (*koinonia*); as the mystical body of Christ and the people of God; it is a notion that struggles to grapple with the church as both a visible institution and an invisible reality, as a hierarchical body and the totality of Catholic believers.

Lumen gentium speaks of the church as a sacrament—"a sign and instrument...of communion with God and [a sign] of unity among all men [and women]" (chapter 1). Avery Dulles, in *Models of the Church*, describes one of those models as "Mystical Communion." He links Saint Paul's understanding of Christ's mystical body with Vatican II's understanding of the people of God. And though Dulles carefully distinguishes the model's strengths and weaknesses, he recognizes that "while the church promises communion, it does not always provide it in very evident form."

The 1985 extraordinary synod and a 1992 instruction from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith also grappled



"Of course, there was a certain amount of local opposition."

MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS *is editor of* Commonweal. *This article is adapted from the Suarez Lecture given at Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with communion ecclesiology, in particular underlining the need to maintain a place for and a consciousness of what is often derisively referred to as "the institutional church." The synod put it this way: "The ecclesiology of communion cannot be reduced to purely organizational questions or to problems which simply relate to powers." Thus they concede a point, but then they go on: "Still, the ecclesiology of communion is also the foundation for order in the church and especially for a correct relationship between unity and pluriformity in the church" (*Origins*, December 19, 1985).

Before I began tracking down this idea of communion, I was inclined to regard it as a front for control, for restorationism, for conformity and uniformity, not for sharing and participation. Yet, I found in my reading that the idea of communion ecclesiology provides a remarkably useful framework, or a kind of superglue, for grappling with some important and difficult issues.

In a very useful article analyzing the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's understanding of communion ecclesiology, Dennis Doyle argues in *America* magazine (September 12, 1992), that the CDF tries to do for doctrine about the church what the fifth-century Council of Chalcedon did for doctrine about Christ. And it does so with negative admonitions which Doyle formulates in the following way:

1. Do not speak of the church as though it were simply a human means of organization that is not intrinsically bound up with God and revelation.

2. Do not speak of the church as though it concerns only people currently living and does not provide real links with those who have died before us.

3. Do not speak of the church as though it were simply a federation made up of local churches without recognizing the sense in which the church universal, born at Pentecost, precedes all local churches.

4. Do not speak of the church as though the Eucharist were not intrinsic to it.

5. Do not speak of the church as though the episcopacy were not intrinsic to it.

6. Do not speak of the church as though its unity and diversity are mutually opposed rather than complementary.

7. Do not speak of the church as though the Petrine ministry were imposed from without rather than representing a constitutive principle of each particular church as such.

8. Do not speak of the Catholic church as though it were incomplete in its very essence as are other churches.

Apophatic admonitions do not provide a positive program; but they suggest outer limits on how we speak of communion, how we understand the church. And Doyle's formulations are a sobering corrective to careless and often unthinking ways in which we do speak about communion, about the church.

What I like particularly about the idea of communion ecclesiology is that it tries to unite, sometimes in tension, an understanding of the church that is inclusive yet has designated boundaries, that is structured yet interpersonal, that is human yet mystical, that is visible sign and invisible transformation. In this sense it conveys the both/and spirit of Catholicism, rather than the either/or spirit of partisan views, of liberal and conservative, church contemplative and church active, church in dialogue and church in opposition, people's church and hierarchical church.

If this definition of terms has been clear, my first major point has already been implied. It may seem paradoxical, even perverse, but in my view a true *understanding of communion implies dissent, and real dissent demands communion*. They go together the way Ben and Jerry used to; when properly blended they produce a rich concoction, though sometimes sprinkled with a few nuts.

To understand this, we need to think about the ways in which dissent commonly arises. It is very seldom an exercise in pure speculation, or the self-aggrandizing acts of disobedience, rebellion, or disloyalty commonly portrayed. More frequently, dissent's origins are found in painful disjunctures between pastoral experience and existing teaching.

Think of the traditional missionary going off in the early decades of this century to a land where he finds good people, who are devotees of a religion that in Catholic teaching was considered heretical or idolatrous, even satanic. Coming to know these people, might he be heartbroken by the obstacles that such a teaching erected to any sort of communion with the church? Might he not even feel a deep rift in communion in his own heart? Torn between the teachings of the church and the truth that he has learned about these people he had come to serve and love, he might well have found himself "feeling apart." The rethinking of established teachings that he might have been led to was born out of his sense of communion and his search for a way to restore it. It was in fact just such missionaries, or the theologians to whom they reported their experiences, whose dissent contributed to the decision of Vatican Council II to revise church teachings on ecumenism and non-Christian religions.

The same story could be told of many others. In most cases, they are not called missionaries or are not ordained. But they have tried to take Christ's message and the church's teachings into the lands of family life, of broken marriages, of modern science and culture, of political and economic oppression, of racial minorities, of excluded women, of sexual outcasts. They have found dissonances between the formulations of doctrine they were taught and what they have seen and experienced.

I am not, of course, arguing that every expression of dissent arising from pastoral problems or obstacles to evangelization is legitimate or helpful. I am saying that a church understanding herself as communion—not, then, as a massive, unmoving, take-it-or-leave-it repository of answers and remedies, but as a gift of love and worship that wants to destroy barriers and offer reconciliation—that church as communion will naturally be a church *semper reformanda*. It will naturally give rise to self-examination, self-criticism, self-extension, and in the process, to dissent. Indeed, it is often the warmth of feeling that communion involves, active participation and not passive subservience, that stirs the passion, the outspokenness, the com-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mitment, the stubbornness in which dissent sometimes cloaks itself.

If one doubts whether real communion implies dissent, imagine a church where dissent had been rendered unthinkable, impermissible, or inexpressible. Would such a church be likely to resemble the interpersonal, vital, ever-deepening, always outstretching encounter of hearts and minds that is communion? Or would it be more likely to resemble the bureaucracy of a government, the conformity of a corporation, the discipline of an army, or even the ideological unanimity of a totalitarian political movement?

But if real communion implies dissent, then real dissent demands communion. I mean nothing more than this: disagreement can only be meaningful when it takes place within a framework of agreement. One cannot really feel apart unless at some level one still feels joined. One can feel estranged from a family member, but not from a casual vacation acquaintance made twenty years ago.

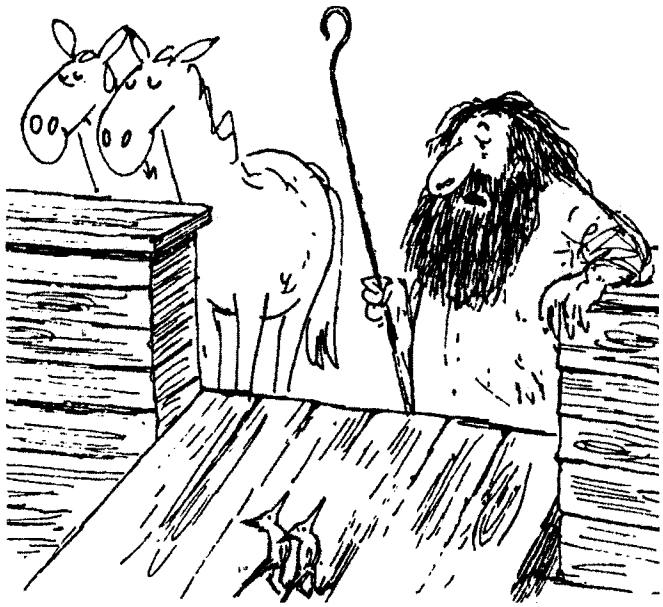
To the extent that communion is attenuated, dissent becomes less significant. When advocates of women's ordination insist that the witness of historical Christianity is irredeemably distorted by patriarchy, or when they reconceive the role of the priest so as to resemble that of the imam, then their dissent over ordination becomes a good deal less compelling. Dissent is possible only when it acknowledges accountability to something outside itself—to a teaching, an authority, a tradition, a history, a people, a revelation.

Now I take it for granted that somewhere a line must be drawn between the dissent that is an inevitable and healthy aspect of communion and the dissent that is no longer compatible with communion. I do not question the efforts of bishops and theologians (it is important to include both) to resolve where, exactly, that line should be drawn in principle. But I do want to argue—and this is my second major point—that in the practical, everyday life of the church, the question of distinguishing between responsible and irresponsible dissent, between dissent in the service of communion and dissent destructive of it, is less than we often suppose a matter of intellectual propositions, and more often a matter of conduct, of attitude, of affection, and of heart.

When liberation theology was flying very high, I often heard the expression "orthopraxis" (right conduct) contrasted to "orthodoxy" (right teaching). I would like to yank orthopraxis from that context and apply it here. Is there an orthopraxis of dissent? An orthopraxis of dissent and communion? An orthopraxis, if you will, of maintaining a dynamic orthodoxy?

I am not suggesting that the church can do without the conceptual apparatus of magisterium and ordinary and extraordinary magisterium and papal ordinary magisterium and solemn definition and infallible and irreformable doctrine and probabilism and equiprobabilism and all the other categories developed over the centuries and used to identify the settled or unsettled state of the church's mind on important issues.

But frankly all this paraphernalia has always mattered (and



"Sorry, no woodpeckers."

I believe will continue to matter) far more in the relatively small, closed, and institutionally accessible world of the clergy than in the world of the laity—a laity whose role in the church, I remind you, has been reasserted by the Second Vatican Council and is assured at least in the United States by the demography of the priesthood and women's religious communities, a laity who can be reached only by voluntary compliance and not by ecclesial penalties.

What is needed is at least as much attention to the manner of dissent as to the matter. Is it articulated with respect or with derision? Does it acknowledge its accountability to the tradition? Does it root itself in the sources of the faith? Is it expressed with both humility and rigor, including rigorous faithfulness in representing, not caricaturing, the existing teaching? Does it admit qualifications or does it traffic in slogans? Does it consciously exploit and ride piggyback on the cultural fashions of the day, or does it deliberately strive to guard against such exploitation? Is it sensitive to pastoral problems, to the cost of conflict and the temptations of partisanship and factionalism?

There is a danger today of a kind of established dissent, dissent as a way of life, dissent as the primary stance some take toward the church. Beyond diversity, beyond clashes of ideas, beyond differences in pastoral practice, beyond the disarray that simply comes with life in such a large and human church, there is something we might want to call dissent of the heart—a state in which one's own spirit stands pridefully apart from community.

Concern about the manner as well as the matter of dissent is in fact already part of our tradition. "Dissent, in the form of carefully orchestrated protests and polemics carried on in the media, is opposed to ecclesial communion and to a correct understanding of the hierarchical constitution of the people of God."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So writes the John Paul II in *Veritatis splendor*.

So far I seem to have suggested that the orthopraxis of dissent and communion is entirely the responsibility of the dissenter. In fact, I think communion demands a certain kind of conduct on the part of the authorities who represent established teachings as well.

Unfortunately there is a version of communion ecclesiology sometimes articulated in the Vatican that comes close to reasserting the pre-Vatican II understanding of the church as institution, as "perfect society," but now garbed with the rhetoric of mystical communion. Communion becomes the rhetorical armor of an essentially juridical, clerical, and centralized understanding of the church, rather than a richer balance and a corrective to such an understanding.

Veritatis splendor, for example, makes frequent reference to a 1990 "Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian" issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is at least my amateur impression that that instruction prescribes a kind of strictly behind-closed-doors expression of dissent, one that all but muzzles theologians and that effectively eliminates most of the laity from making important contributions to the development and growth of Catholic teaching, a result inconsistent with a concern for communion.

Now for another paradox. So far I have been giving a lot of attention to the phenomenon of dissent. Yet it is another part of my thesis that our contemporary focus on dissent not only magnifies its importance but distracts at least some of us from seeing and working on other problems that are far more serious and threatening to the good health, even the survival, of communion. Here is a prime example. Perceptive Catholics have good reason to be worried about how well we are handing on the faith to coming generations. In their anxiety some Catholics have taken to scouring religious education textbooks, finding there all sorts of real or imagined heresies. Their anxiety is at least partially rooted in the fact that in the years after Vatican II, religious education overreacted to the rote indoctrination and implicit Counter-Reformation polemicizing of the *Baltimore Catechism*. Instead of question-and-answer catechism classes, religious education swung sharply in the direction of stressing attitude over content, social justice over sacramental life.

In fact, religious education has undergone many alterations of course since then, and although Catholics may continue to differ about the contents or pedagogy of this or that program, it would be a delusion to imagine that tracking down and eliminating dissent is the key to restoring the effectiveness of religious education.

Consider: In 1965, over 50 percent of school-age Catholics were in Catholic schools. Today the figure is about 25 percent. The other 75 percent, instead of being immersed in an environment of prayers before class, religious imagery, and daily religion classes, are getting at best twenty hours a year of discontinuous religious education, often taught by volunteers with varying degrees of training who face formidable obstacles in placing intellectual demands on their students.

I am not saying that Catholics educated outside of Catholic schools were not historically well-educated in their faith. Many certainly were. But the whole enterprise was easier when a standard was set by a critical mass of young Catholics getting extensive exposure in Catholic grammar schools and high schools.

Today, even within Catholic schools, where lay teachers now predominate, many report being hesitant in their teaching of religion, not because they are less devout or knowledgeable than the sisters they have replaced but simply because it is an unfamiliar role for which they were not prepared by the intense formation of religious life. In some cases, a growing number of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools, reflecting the church's commitment to those in need, also complicates the task of education and formation. So, as many college teachers testify, the current problem is not dissent but ignorance, religious illiteracy.

Behind this shift of the last three decades are both socio-economic and cultural forces: the movement of Catholics to suburbs, the rising cost of parochial education, the breakdown of ethnic neighborhoods and immigrant subcultures, the fading of antagonism, hostility, and defensiveness between Catholics and Protestants, the changing role of women, the decline in the number of teaching sisters.

The censorious mind could condemn these developments as assimilationism and attribute them to supposed departures from orthodoxy; I think that would be wrong. Many, for example, spring from recovery of the church's full teaching on the sanctity of marriage and the vocation of the laity.

Let me take this question of religious education—which I believe is crucial—to another level. Currently the American bishops and college and university presidents are struggling to write ordinances that would put into terms of concrete obligations the conditions for preserving the Catholic identity of Catholic colleges and universities, in keeping with the papal document *Ex corde ecclesiae*.

This whole effort has run aground on the question of whether members of Catholic theology departments must seek a mandate to teach from local bishops, a measure that Vatican officials consider essential to quelling what they see as dissent, but which many Catholic educators see as an outside intervention in the affairs of the university incompatible with academic freedom and autonomy. The possibility of confrontation and alienation between bishops and educators is very real. In this way, a very serious concern about the religious identity of Catholic higher education and the danger of a drift toward secularization may end, in counterproductive fashion, by actually encouraging that drift.

This impasse, I believe, reflects a misplaced focus on dissent. Imagine Catholic colleges and universities with theology departments where no one ever said or wrote a word that raised an eyebrow in Rome. Students might dutifully take two semesters of required courses from those teachers, but otherwise encounter little or nothing of the Catholic tradition—and of the questions that have preoccupied it—in their history, philosophy, litera-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ture, social or natural science courses, in their extracurricular activities, and in conversations between faculty members and students. The little dissent-free enclave of a theology department is surely not going to communicate Catholic identity, indeed it may strangle it, especially if it is established and maintained in ways that convince most academics that the church and its teachings are hostile to genuinely free inquiry.

So to sum up: Beware the notion that dissent is the single most important factor in the American church's many current difficulties, and the companion idea that by quelling dissent we will be home free.

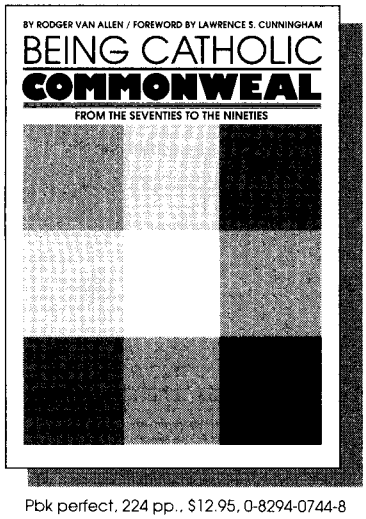
It remains to examine the context. The questions at hand cannot be usefully pursued very far in the abstract, so I would like to explore some of the ways in which this complex relationship between dissent and communion is affected by the realities of contemporary America.

The first of these realities that comes to mind is that we are a First Amendment culture. Freedom of religion, separation of church and state, and free speech are our deservedly prized achievements. Like other valuable things, these achievements can be idolized, but, looking around the world, one sees why we prize them. During the Second Vatican Council, American Catholics made our positive experience of the First Amendment a gift to the whole church, which has now adopted a policy of religious freedom and defense of the rights of conscience, becoming in the past thirty years a champion of human rights in lands less blessed than our own.

American Catholics live in a country born in dissent and sustained by it. In one way that creates a problem for communion. But in another sense the American conviction that religious faith must be personal, voluntary, free of coercion, and subject to all the pressures and cross-currents of free speech and open debate is a declaration of what communion must be about.

In the mid-1980s I participated in an international conference of Catholic business leaders and high church officials on one of the drafts of the American bishops' pastoral letter on the U.S. economy. It became clear to me that regardless of whether their proclivities were liberal or conservative, the European and Roman churchmen were highly suspicious of the extensive process of wide consultation and open discussion that the American bishops had mounted in writing both that letter and the pastoral letter on war and peace in a nuclear age. For the Americans, such a process naturally strengthened the authority of the bishops' letter. For the Europeans, such a process of consultation and open debate automatically weakened the authority of the bishops' letter, because the process acknowledged the need to get input from other than ecclesiastical sources. I believe that the American bishops' procedure better reflected an understanding of the church as

70TH ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS
from Loyola University Press



Pbk perfect. 224 pp., $12.95, 0-8294-0744-8

Being Catholic: *Commonweal* from the Seventies to the Nineties
by Rodger Van Allen

Explore the path of American Catholicism and especially its lay intellectual leadership with Van Allen. He examines the key issues and dialogue that have appeared in *Commonweal* for more than two decades.

You'll find these and other current topics:
- ❑ abortion
- ❑ presidential politics
- ❑ the papacy
- ❑ the challenge of peace
- ❑ economics

Father Ted Hesburgh describes *Commonweal* as
"loyal to its Catholic tradition . . . and free to question (this tradition), reassess it, keep it alive (and) put it to work on current questions."

Available at your local bookstore, or directly from:
Loyola University Press
3441 North Ashland Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60657 / 800-621-1008 or 312-281-1818 (in Illinois)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

communion, and I am disturbed that despite the Vatican's endorsement of communion ecclesiology, the American hierarchy, increasingly shaped by new appointments and the shadow of Vatican displeasure, might well back away from any such consultative process today.

Second, and less happily, our First Amendment culture is also, and not coincidentally, an individualist culture. We view and organize society in terms of individual rights and personal choices, which seem to trump all social bonds and social responsibilities. We are more *pluribus* than *unum*. This mindset makes a sense of community and concern for the common good fragile and vulnerable. It affects not only our civic community but reaches into the realm of religion, raising obstacles to communion. It is not just that we love underdogs, naysayers, people who thumb their noses at established authority. No, our individualism leads us to believe that religious faith needs no community.

Some keep the Sabbath going to church;
I keep it staying at home,
With a bobolink for a chorister,
And an orchard for a dome.

Emily Dickinson's verse is echoed throughout the best and worst of American culture: it is the lone worshiper in nature, not the gathered congregation, that we respect and celebrate. The same outlook is confirmed in Gallup polls in which Americans overwhelmingly endorse the importance of being religious but agree that one can be religious without attachment to any organized religion. Catholicism has challenged that American assumption, and our challenge once made the culture very nervous. But increasingly American Catholics are being shaped by the individualist culture.

The healthy, practical-minded, live-and-let-live form of tolerance that individualism also encourages can easily slide into a shallow relativism. If everyone has his or her own opinion, and if everyone's opinion is as good as everyone else's, then there is no real reason to re-examine, grapple, rethink. Both dissent and communion are trivialized, treated almost as matters of happenstance that can be worn lightly and shed as easily.

All this is reinforced by a dominant market economy and consumer culture. We exercise our judgment simply by abandoning one product or label for another. The ultimate in such selective ease is TV channel-surfing, and baby-boomers are said to be religion-surfing, moving from church to church on the basis of whatever satisfies their immediate needs, from a twelve-step program or a child-care center to their special taste in music.

This consumer culture has given us terms like cafeteria Catholicism, supermarket Catholicism, pick-and-choose or mix-and-match Catholicism. I think such images are an insult to those Catholics who have made conscientious decisions after serious prayer, reflection, and anguish that a specific church teaching does not deserve their adherence. But I also think that such terms do name a reality, and one that is obviously at odds with both communion and serious dissent.

Finally, some words about the media. Virtually every discussion of the church's difficulty these days—a point echoed in every other religious group as well—occasions an indictment of the media. I am as ready to indict the media as the next person, but let me first offer some caveats.

Frequently the readiness of religious leaders to blame their ills on the media strikes me like the persistence of Soviet leaders in blaming seven decades of crop failures on each year's bad weather. Do we dare whisper the word "alibi"? Whatever the shortcomings of Soviet weather, real or imagined, you can't keep claiming year after year that they took you by surprise.

Literacy was a fact of the post-printing press world, just as illiteracy was a fact of the Middle Ages. The church had to ad-

Anne Porter

In Another World

It was the second decade
Of our century
When I began my life
Large patches of the former century
Lingered like snow in April

Cities were quiet
Though sometimes in the night
The tomcats quarreled
The only sounds by day
Were the clip-clop
Of horses' feet
The chirp of sparrows

And in the alleys
RAGS BONES AND BOTTLES
The rag-man's cry

The casks of beer and ale
The lumber and the coal
Gravel and blocks of stone
Were hauled in heavy wagons
By teams of slow
Colossal horses

The streams were clear
The forests all around us
Were deep and strong
And no one knew
That Nature could be wounded.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

just to both. Media saturation is a fact of the modern world. The church need not respond in a subservient fashion to that fact, bending to glib prophets of an electronic age. Baroque Catholicism successfully employed image and ceremony, rather than concentrating on the private word as did various streams of Protestantism. Today Catholic teaching does not have to be refashioned for MTV, but the reality of MTV and network news and sitcoms and talk radio and elite newspapers has to be part of Catholic teachers' calculations just as much as is, say, the reality that significant numbers of U.S. Catholics speak Spanish or Vietnamese or Haitian Creole. Today we all speak media, in a dozen distinct dialects.

My second caveat about indictments of the media is that sometimes I think they really disguise the hierarchy's unwillingness to come to terms with the realities that a great many among the Catholic laity are well-educated and their thinking is outside the hierarchy's direct control.

Persuasion is central to the question of dissent and communion. Yet the church's commitment to persuasion remains hobbled by a hankering after control and censorship. There is no way in which new questions and challenging opinions are going to be kept from the ears of Catholics. If robust theological discussion of issues that deeply concern people is stifled in Catholic institutions, Catholics will simply draw on the discussions in institutions where the Catholic tradition may be less present.

The church still labors under a long history of silencing critical and questioning thought, a history sometimes simplistically entrenched in the mythology of modernity. In this regard, it is scrutinized more than many other institutions, and it pays dearly therefore in loss of credibility for its every sign of resistance to free inquiry and debate.

None of this dispels the problems that the media create in the relationship between dissent and communion. There is, for example, the megaphone effect. Any dissenting voice may be amplified, so that it becomes virtually impossible to distinguish marginal views, whether on the right or the left, from convictions reflecting serious theological study or enjoying the support of large groups of the faithful. The media sword is, of course, two-edged: fringe opinions can needlessly disrupt the composure of the faithful, or serious questions that should rightly disrupt our composure can be dismissed as sensationalism or media mischief.

Much of the megaphone effect arises not so much from the ill will of the media as from its structure. Newspapers and broadcasting work under extreme constraints of space and time. Competition for readers or audiences demands matching stories. The result is simplification, dramatization, highlighting of conflict, and a wrenching of dissent from its context.

Added to these structural constraints and competitive pressures is an ideological factor. Journalism inherits from the muckraking era an ingrained skepticism toward authorities and a suspicion that pronouncements of ideals generally mask hypocrisy. Entertainment in the media, by contrast, often panders to conventional morality, all the while spicing its performances with as much of the forbidden and titillating as it can get away with.

News coverage and entertainment frequently converge in viewing conservative religion, especially evangelical Protestantism or official Catholicism, as the bulwark of a morality experienced as either hypocritical or constraining, constricting life rather than protecting or enhancing it. Dissent, whether of the left or right, will be perceived and presented as confirmation that the church is a brittle fossil or an authoritarian throwback. Catholics as much as non-Catholics absorb these images of the church, and they are not images likely to foster communion.

It is naive or disingenuous for Catholics who dissent not to recognize that this is the media context in which they act, and deliberately to do their best to foresee, prevent, or compensate for the kinds of distortions that may result.

How do we bridge all of these chasms between dissent and communion, some of our own making, some of the culture's? That is a topic for another article. But I believe the best starting point is our most common and direct experience of communion, the Sunday liturgy.

The Mass is, I think, both the first work of the church and the last, the opening up and the summing up, the beginning and the end of what we are supposed to be doing; or, as Henri de Lubac, S.J., has put it: "The church produces the Eucharist, but the Eucharist also produces the church." The Mass gathers us, and our work, our joys and our sorrows, our dissent and our assent, and helps us to reflect on them, to pray over them, to offer them up. We might say that the Sunday liturgy both confronts us and comforts us with ultimate meaning in a world suffering a crisis of meaning. In the Eucharist not only is the bread and wine transformed into the body and blood of Christ, but in that transformation, the people too are transformed, our work given meaning, our sorrows blessed, our lives reordered and reoriented, our hearts turned from stone to living flesh....

And then we are sent forth in the name of the Lord... to do mischief, be an annoyance, to live our faith in this world, this United States with all of the ambiguities, conflicts, and tensions inherent in our kind of culture. We Catholics, all of us, need to become smarter about how we deal with them and live with them. We need to practice a pedagogy and politics of persuasion.

Let me end with some other words from de Lubac, a man who was a dissenter, was silenced for his dissent, and yet who saw his sense of the church come to fruition in the work of Vatican II. Perhaps more than anyone, he gave a secure foundation to this idea of communion ecclesiology, one we are still trying to achieve. I quote from his book, *The Splendor of the Church*: "The church...really makes herself by the celebration of the mystery; the holy and sanctifying church builds up the church of the saints. The mystery of communication is rounded out in a mystery of communion—such is the meaning of the ancient and ever-fresh word 'communion.'" □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MY PATRON, THOMAS THE DOUBTER

HE'S OUR TWIN

PAUL ELIE

The summer before last, the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibited a pair of bronze sculptures by the Renaissance master Andrea del Verrocchio. Since 1483 the two figures had stood in a cupola outside the Orsanmichele in Florence, exposed to sun and moon, wind and rain, chimney smoke and car exhaust, until their surfaces were hardly visible under layers of grime. In 1988 they were removed for restoration, and five years later they were put on view at the Metropolitan, flanked by exhibits which showed how they had been restored and how they had been cast in the first place, five centuries ago.

"Verrocchio's *Christ and Saint Thomas*" was the sort of modest, unsung, scholarly exhibition that even the most ardent museum patron can miss without knowing the difference. I almost missed it myself. I had come to the museum intending to see a Magritte retrospective, but the line was a Sunday afternoon long, so I wandered into the cool dark rooms of medieval art, just looking. Here were works I knew well, shorn of wonder by their familiarity. I paid my respects and moved on. Further in, the Lehman wing was brightly lit—and there the two figures loomed up like some medieval prophet's vision of the Renaissance beyond: *Christ and Saint Thomas*, a *pas de deux* in shining bronze, Christ's right hand raised in blessing and his left one pulling his cloak away from his side so that Thomas, leaning toward him, might see the wound there, and touch it, and know him as the risen Lord. I wasn't just looking anymore. Something majestic was being enacted in the next room. I went closer to see for myself. But I am getting ahead of my story, and Saint Thomas's.

Thomas's encounter with Christ is one of the more familiar episodes in the New Testament, made so by the liturgy for the Sunday after Easter. The account we have is in chapter 20 of the Gospel according to John, who—crucially—claims to be an eyewitness, telling us what he saw.

John tells us that on the evening of the day when Jesus rose from the dead—the first Easter Sunday—the Apostles assembled in a room and barred the doors, afraid they would be persecuted. Yet Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. Then he showed them his wounds. He breathed on them, and bade them receive the Holy Spirit. As the Father had sent him, so now he was sending them, and with power: as they forgave sins so sins would be forgiven, and as they retained sins so sins would be retained.

Here enters the Apostle who will be known till the end of time as Doubting Thomas. We have seen him before. He appears in all four Gospels, and in John's account he emerges as ardent but hesitant, like Peter but without the keys to any kingdom. John tells us that when Lazarus died and Jesus made plans to go to see Lazarus's sisters in Judea even though he might be stoned there, Thomas said: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Later, when Jesus tried to explain his destiny to the Apostles, Thomas didn't understand, so he pressed the point, prompting Jesus' boldest declaration about himself. "You know the way I am going," Jesus said. No, we don't, said Thomas: "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" To which Jesus replied, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

This Thomas, John tells us, was absent from the group on

PAUL ELIE *is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.* *This essay has been adapted from* A Tremor of Bliss: Contemporary Writers on the Saints, *edited by Paul Elie.* *Copyright © 1994 by Paul Elie. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the evening after Jesus rose from the dead. In the days afterward, the disciples told Thomas they'd seen Jesus. But Thomas had his doubts, and he knew what it would take to dispel them. "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side," he told them, "I will not believe."

"Eight days later," John continues, "his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them." Again the doors were shut, yet again Jesus came and stood among them and offered them peace. Now, Jesus' arrival alone might be a sign that he really had risen from the dead. Remember, there were bars on the doors. But Thomas still had his doubts, and rightly so, because if what he doubted (and this is what John suggests) was that the Jesus the others had seen was flesh and blood, a man walking and talking, he would hardly be persuaded by a figure who was able to pass through locked doors.

Prove it to me, this Thomas insisted. Show us what you're made of.

Jesus turned to him and said, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing."

We don't know whether Thomas reached out then, whether he pressed his finger in Christ's wounded hands and felt the gash over his ribs. All we have is his reply, and it is enough.

"My Lord and my God," Thomas said.

"Have you believed because you have seen me?" Christ asked Thomas. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." In the moment Christ speaks as if to all time, his words rising from the text to address us directly, a line cast in a long high arc across the centuries to fall at our end of the pond. *Blessed are you, dear reader, you who have not seen and yet believe.* But it is the visual image of the encounter, not the words, that hooks the mind and sinks in and doesn't let go. Christ reveals himself. Thomas reaches out. The other disciples look on.

In the Catholic parishes I know, the Doubting Thomas story is often presented as a footnote to the Resurrection—a story on a human scale, easier for the cafeteria Catholic to identify with than Jesus's Passion, death, and rising from the dead. The priest will note that Thomas is also called Didymus, "twin" in Greek, and he'll make this the moral of the story: Doubting Thomas is the most ordinary of believers, a twin to us all.

In Verrocchio's *Christ and Saint Thomas*, though, the encounter is rendered literally larger than life. Christ and Saint Thomas crowd out of the cupola that would enclose them. They are giants, with broad shoulders and deep chests, draped in cloaks that fall over them fold upon bronze fold. Thomas is the proverbial innocent of antiquity, all apple cheeks and flowing hair. And Christ—well, he looks the way a man who has died and come back to life might look: his face is lined, his eyes are lidded, his hairline has receded, and there are jagged gouges in his hands where the sculptor who created him, like the men who crucified him, must have hammered spikes through.

Seeing *Christ and Saint Thomas*, one can understand why Verrocchio was a favorite of the Medicis and the teacher of Leonardo and Botticelli. And yet the grandeur of the two figures seems to derive from something other than Verrocchio's way with bronze. Other artists have depicted the episode's natural climax, and shown Thomas touching Christ's wounds. Verrocchio has shown instead the moment just prior to that one, when Christ shows his wounds to the disciple. The moment of truth comes not when truth is confirmed, but when truth is revealed. It is open-ended, undecided, still in progress.

In Verrocchio's work the moment of truth is made incarnate with power, and the notion that Thomas is our twin is given body and soul. That Sunday at the Met, I was struck by the way Thomas's experience of revelation resembles the experience of the person who looks at Verrocchio's sculptures. Thomas has come to see something; in a different way, so has the museum patron. As if to stress this kinship, Verrocchio has shown Thomas leaning in from the lip of the cupola, keeping a foothold in the world outside it—our world—with the huge toes of his right foot.

You don't have to be an art historian to feel that kinship in your bones. And you don't have to be a believing Christian to suppose that it finally has to do with religious experience. Thomas leans close to examine Christ, and meets his God. The art lover steps up to see the work, and encounters Christ. Christ invited Thomas to see and believe, and so has Verrocchio, in a work packed full of the implications of seeing and revealing.

I spent nearly an hour with the two figures that Sunday afternoon at the Metropolitan. I looked at them from every conceivable angle, as though I hoped to make the work's solidly classical proportions fragmented and cubist. Then I followed the crowd to the related exhibits arrayed nearby. Models of Christ and Saint Thomas, the size of G.I. Joe dolls, were arranged in glass cases to demonstrate the "lost-wax" casting process. Photographs showed the two figures at various stages of the restoration—hung on winches, laid on worktables, attended to by experts in lab coats and protective eyeglasses. A documentary film played over and over on a television in a corner, filling the gallery with the narrator's coolly authoritative voice.

The side exhibits were very interesting. There was something comforting in the way the models and photographs reduced the two figures to the scale of our own time, presented them as the subjects of chemical analysis and curatorial know-how. Yet I kept returning to the figures themselves. They held their poses in the cupola, caught forever in the act of encounter. Christ pulled his cloak away from his side. Thomas leaned toward him. So did I. I was in the mood to wonder.

Thomas struggled to see Christ with his own eyes—as flesh and blood, and as Lord and God. For this, the church has recognized him as the patron saint of people who suffer from blindness. That is wonderfully paradoxical. I would like to go further, though. I think we can recognize Thomas as a patron or type of all those who would reckon with Christ, and I think we can see his encounter with Christ as a definitive example of how that reckoning might come about.

No one today can see Christ the way Thomas did. We can-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not be present in a locked room in Jerusalem in the first century when Christ comes by. We cannot put our finger into the wounds in Christ's hands, or place our hand in his side. We cannot look him in the eye and say, "My Lord and my God." Christ himself seems to have acknowledged this when he called blessed those who have not seen and yet believe.

Yet those who would believe in Christ must see him, somehow, and must see him for who he is. Arguably this is the point of the Doubting Thomas story. If anyone is going to believe in Christ, he has got to reckon with him personally—see him with his own eyes.

In itself that doesn't tell us much. For practically every passage in the Gospels is a record of somebody's reckoning with Christ—as a son, a teacher, a healer, a feeder of multitudes; as a religious rebel, a threat to public order, and a convicted criminal; as a stranger on the Emmaus road, and as risen Lord, ascending to heaven but promising to return when the time is right.

Thomas's encounter with Christ occupies a special place in the Gospels, though. Scripture scholars have proposed that John's Gospel, traditionally placed last when the four are grouped, originally concluded with chapter 20, the account of Thomas and Christ being followed only by a brief coda: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." Presented at the end of the Gospel accounts, Christ's revelation of himself to Thomas at once sums up those signs and wonders we've read about and points toward those we can only imagine. And Thomas's response can be seen as a *précis* of the shape conversion might take in those who would see Christ with their own eyes.

But how? Twenty centuries is a long time, and wayward history has accumulated on the figure of Christ like grime on a bronze giant; we look around us, and don't see signs and wonders but a broken world, a fractious people, and no end in sight, just length of days unfolding further and further away from the moment of truth. How, how? Tell us. Show us. Let us know.

What must we see in order to believe? Where do we stand in relation to Christ and his contemporaries, such as Saint Thomas? Kierkegaard dwelt on these questions at length in *Philosophical Fragments*, weighing what he called "The Case of the Contemporary Disciple" against that of "The Disciple at Second Hand." As Kierkegaard saw it, the disciple who was a contemporary of Jesus (called "the God" in his text) had the great advantage of seeing him with his own eyes. "But may he also believe that this makes him a disciple? By no means. If he believes his eyes, he is deceived, for the God is not immediately knowable." For Christ is knowable only through faith, which is granted by God. Given this, the disciple who had seen Christ probably found it *harder* to believe as a result. "He is constantly reminded that he did not see or hear the God immediately, but merely a humble human being who said of himself that he was the God."

For the disciple at second hand, things are harder in some ways—but easier in others. Distant in time from the events in Jerusalem, he must sift through all the "gossip, chatter, rumors" and the like that have come to surround Christ, and he is insulated from the shock of Christ's appearing, which would make clear just how radical a proposition faith in Christ is. To his advantage, the notion that God walked the earth has been "naturalized" over time, and so in some ways has become easier to believe. More important, this disciple's distance from Christ in time reminds him that his stance toward Christ is founded upon faith and not mere historical evidence. Kierkegaard found a characteristically brilliant metaphor for this: "Is not Venice built over the sea, even if it became so solidly built up that a generation finally came upon the scene that did not notice it; and would it not be a sad misunderstanding if this last generation made the mistake of permitting the piles to rot and the city to sink?"

Kierkegaard's point is that "all disciples are essentially equal." The contemporary disciple and the disciple of the last generation—our generation—stand in the same relation to Christ. We become his disciples—and his contemporaries—through faith. Kierkegaard was a Lutheran and deeply iconoclastic, of course, and these aspects of his character help to explain his insistence that Christ can be known through faith alone. In declaring his own contemporaries equals of Christ's through their faith, he could take for granted that Christ had been made known to them through the churches and through a Christian culture—art, music, liturgy, philosophy—present in Denmark and the rest of Europe at the time.

This can no longer be taken for granted. Christ is still present in our culture, but even in the churches there is doubt about whether he ought to be, and even those who would see Christ are reluctant to be seen as Christians, to make him known. And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

much of Christian culture today seems to dispel faith rather than call it forth.

The church, it is said, is Christ made visible. Put that way, the notion seems smug and dishonest, an echo from a more presumptuous age. Yet if it can't be said that the church is Christ made visible, it can't be denied that the church should make Christ visible. That is its work in the world. And in these circumstances, the Doubting Thomas story makes clear that the act of seeing Christ is bound up with the act of making him visible. Witnessing and bearing witness are two parts of the same encounter, and one encounter with Christ gives rise to another. We can see this in the skeleton of the Doubting Thomas story. After his rising Christ came by. The Apostles saw him. They told Thomas. Thomas doubted. Then he came and saw him too. John was there. He saw it. And he let the world know.

Those are the essentials of the life of a saint, really anyone. For whatever else they are, the lives of the saints are records of personal encounters with Christ from his time down to ours. In them we can see the great variety of ways people have seen Christ with their own eyes, then gone on to make him known. How unfortunate, then, that in an effort to emphasize the need for a personal encounter with Christ the church has come to doubt the usefulness of the saints. John Paul II has canonized prolifically, but the church in North America is unsure and even embarrassed about the saints. Saints are present to us as statues or the occasion for feast days, as symbols of ethnic solidarity or the stuff of theological quandaries, but they generally are not seen as people who sought God and in Christ found him made known. So it was that when it came time for me to be confirmed as a Catholic Christian a dozen years ago, I knew almost nothing about the saints. I was sixteen, and my family belonged to a suburban parish that seemed determined to symbolize American Catholics' emancipation from the urban, ethnic, tradition-soaked enclaves typical of the church earlier in the century. The parish church, dedicated in 1963, was named not for a saint but for the doctrine of the Assumption. One priest who had worked in the parish was (and is) now the bishop of the diocese, and he would return in the spring to confirm several dozen of us in our faith. During the winter we prepared for confirmation in weekly classes organized around a workbook called *Making Moral Decisions*, and in a retreat during which we were asked to lie in the pews and pray. Then, one evening a month before the date of the rite, we were told to return the next week having picked a confirmation name, that of the saint who would be the patron of our adult lives in faith. My father was waiting in the parking lot in his green '74 Valiant, and as we drove home I explained the assignment. There was a problem, I told him. I didn't know about any saints.

"Well," he said. "There's Saint Francis of Assisi, and Saint Francis Xavier, the missionary, and Saint Bonaventure the medieval theologian—the college in Buffalo is named for him. There's Saint John, and there's Paul—but you already have his name. And there's Saint Thomas—Thomas Aquinas, the philosopher, and Thomas More, he was a martyr, and the Apostle Thomas. Doubting Thomas." "Right, right." He was naming the greatest saints, the most intellectual ones, I could tell, appealing to my exalted sense of myself. I appreciated the effort. He was missing the point, though, and I told him so. Here I was, supposedly ready to be confirmed, and I didn't know anything about those saints except what he told me. Wasn't it wrong to be confirmed in a faith I really didn't understand or even know much about? Wasn't that rote and hypocritical, exactly what Jesus wouldn't want?

We were almost home. He turned down our road. The headlights flashed on the siding of the house on the corner.

"Maybe you're right," he said. "Maybe you're not ready to be confirmed after all." And then: "Maybe you don't believe."

"Maybe not," I said. "Maybe I never will."

"May be."

He pulled the car into the driveway and we went inside, and right away I called Eileen. She was my best friend, and I loved the way she abandoned chemistry lab procedures in favor of spontaneous public readings from *Look Homeward, Angel* and the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*.

I asked her if she knew what her confirmation name would be.

"Thomas," she said. "For Thomas Wolfe, because he's my saint, isn't he? It's supposed to be meaningful, the name is supposed to mean something to you. I don't care what they say. I'm going to be confirmed and my patron is going to be Thomas."

It was decided. I was going to be confirmed and my patron was going to be Thomas.

We were confirmed a month later, dozens of us, all with new names of obscure provenance. Eileen delivered the first reading; I did the second. After the Gospel the bishop performed the rite itself, etching the sign of the cross on our foreheads.

What about the crisis of faith that had struck me as my father and I rode home from church in the green Valiant that evening? I hadn't resolved it. In a sense I never have, and don't fully expect to. But my father had told me what I needed to know. While he couldn't give me a crash course in the lives of the saints, he made clear that confirmation was an authentic sounding of my experience of Christ as I surged toward adulthood. My doubts were my own. My faith was my own. I was free to see Christ for myself, and it was up to me to reckon with him in the encounter. Thomas the Apostle was my patron saint after all.

And what a patron. He is the patron saint of doubters, of those of us who find that belief and disbelief trade places in the soul like watchmen taking shifts; he is the patron saint of those who suffer from blindness, who try as we might can't see as we ought. I want to go further, though, to claim more. Thomas is the patron of all of us who would try to see Christ for ourselves, who would dare to draw close, to reach out and touch him and know him as Lord. Thomas is our twin, yes—but more than that he is Christ's twin, the human person Christ came to make himself known for. One is of God, the other is one of us, yet they are figures cast from the same bronze, forever joined in an encounter, the end of the story still waiting to be told. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE COMMUNITY OF SANT'EGIDIO

VATICAN II MADE REAL

ROBERT P. IMBELLI

A spring evening in Rome. People, returning from work, pause in one of the city's countless piazzas, chatting amiably. These public spaces seem expressly designed for such conviviality, luring individuals and families into the forum of the *res publica*. Then at seven, as the bell of the baroque church in this ancient Roman district of Trastevere tolls, they enter the church for vespers, not to leave the world, but to concentrate it at its still point. The Community of Sant'Egidio comes together in prayer.

The community takes its name from the old Carmelite convent in that small piazza in Trastevere where its members have gathered each evening since the early seventies and which still remains the heart of a community now numbering 15,000 members. Half the members live in Rome and come together for prayer, worship, and social service in local groups, large and small, in various zones of the sprawling metropolis. Another 5,000 live in other Italian cities; and the rest in various European countries, as well as in Africa and Latin America. A first initiative in the United States has just begun in New York.

The community's origins recall the Gospel's "mustard seed." A group of Roman high school students, meeting together in the fateful year 1968, in the midst of ecclesial and social turmoil, pledged to live their lives in the light of the gospel and the service of the poor. From such inconspicuous seeds has grown a spiritually vibrant community that is now recognized canonically by the Holy See as a Public Association of Laity (though a small number of members are priests and religious). The president of Sant'Egidio, who must be a lay person, is elected every four years by delegates, themselves chosen by the more than three hundred local communities.

Impressions abounded during that first vesper service and in subsequent visits and exchanges with community members. I was struck most forcefully by the evangelical spirituality that directs the members' vision and commitment. One sensed the task of evangelization to be so urgent, the harvest so ripe, that little time could be spared for ecclesiastical polarization and contestation. The profound spiritual renewal, desired and charted by Vatican II, seems here to have brought forth mature fruit.

The community's service to the poor, for example, takes multiple forms according to local needs. Members visit the elderly and shut-ins. They minister to the handicapped and to those afflicted with AIDS. They organize classes for children and staff soup kitchens, including the central one in Trastevere that serves 1,500 dinners a day. The community sponsors advocacy forums in Rome to support the new immigrants from Africa and Eastern Europe. As Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini of Milan has written: "What impresses about Sant'Egidio is its unique integration of a profound sense of prayer and Scripture with an intelligent commitment to the poor and to difficult issues of social justice."

This ongoing commitment of Sant'Egidio to the poor and to social justice works daily, barely perceptible miracles in the lives of countless people. But, without doubt, the most dramatic of these miracles occurred on October 4, 1992, when, through the patient mediation of members of Sant'Egidio, a historic peace accord was signed between representatives of the government and rebels of Mozambique. Several years of intense negotiations, shepherded by the community, overcame the suspicion and hostility that had wrought untold suffering and death (one million dead, over a million refugees) and opened the way of hope for a more just and peaceful future.

ROBERT P. IMBELLI, *a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, teaches systematic theology at Boston College. For the current academic year he is visiting professor at Saint Joseph Seminary, Dunwoodie, New York.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Do Unto Others So They Can Do For Themselves."

The Catholic Church's Campaign for Human Development gives poor and low-income Americans a chance to control their own lives. Since 1970, CHD has made grants of more than $200 million to hundreds of successful projects run by the poor. With CHD's help, they have:

- created affordable housing for families
- helped the unemployed find jobs
- supported neighborhood efforts to combat crime
- improved local schools in low-income areas
- started cooperative businesses

Your contribution to CHD will give America's poor what they need most—a chance to work together to build a better life for themselves.

Campaign For Human Development

The Catholic Church Working to End Poverty and Injustice in America.

For more information or to send a donation, write or call:
Campaign for Human Development
U.S. Catholic Conference
3211 Fourth Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20017-1194

1-800-946-4CHD

United States Catholic Conference

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sant'Egidio's long presence and service in Mozambique and the relationships of trust it had cultivated with the contending parties lent it credibility to promote this dialogue of peace. During the protracted and often tense negotiations, the community's representatives often repeated John XXIII's dictum: "Let us commit ourselves to what unites rather than to what divides us." Sustained by what they call the "strength-in-weakness of faith and prayer," the community's participation also reflected a realistic (even hard-nosed) incarnational sense of the need for concrete institutional forms to guarantee the peace accord.

This continuum of concern, from the regional to the international, from local parish to ecumenical dialogue among the world religions, from fervent liturgical celebration to responsibility in the world, marks the comprehensive vision of Sant'Egidio. Its realization is unimaginable without the inspiration and direction that Vatican II represents for the contemporary church. But it is equally unimaginable without the community's whole-hearted response to both the letter and the spirit of the council. The members of Sant'Egidio accept the council's integral vision: the primacy of God's Word, the centrality of liturgical prayer, the church as sacrament of unity, the world as worthy of respect and theater of responsible action. By doing so, this association of the laity has thrown open the doors of the former Carmelite cloister of Sant'Egidio to embrace the world: it has wed contemplation to action; joined the mystical and the political.

Not that the community has been altogether immune from criticism. A few pastors in Rome, who respected and praised much about Sant'Egidio, also complained that community members were insufficiently integrated into parish life, in some instances seeming to create parallel structures. Other criticism concerned a perceived tendency by the community to "go it alone," rather than collaborate with other groups, for example, on social justice projects.

Members of the community with whom I raised these questions conceded some validity to the observations. A point they stressed in response was the obvious one that Sant'Egidio is still a young community in the church. Indeed, to exist canonically as a Lay Public Association is itself a pioneering enterprise. Little wonder that, especially in the early years, a good deal of "feeling one's way" was the rule. At times this led to misunderstanding and, perhaps, to too autonomous an attitude.

However, in Rome itself, the community now participates on some fifty parish pastoral councils; it enjoys the active encouragement and support of the pope's vicar for Rome. But, by design, Sant'Egidio reaches out precisely to those not in the mainstream of parish life: the marginalized and the alienated. Their very charism consists in stretching established institutional boundaries.

Bringing the perspective and concerns of a theologian to my encounters, I came away delighted and impressed by the substantive nature of the community's theological foundation. The community's life and mission rest upon the "four pillars" of the Second Vatican Council: the constitutions on divine revelation, the liturgy, the church, and the church in the modern world. The organic and compelling *integration* of these four dimensions of the Christian life, not some "new breakthrough" or "magic formula," represents, to my mind, the distinctive grace of Sant'Egidio. Those eighteen-year-olds, in 1968, rediscovered the revealed Word of God, the Gospel, in a way similar to its rediscovery by the bishops of Vatican II, culminating in the council's great constitution on revelation, *Dei verbum*, the "Word of God." This primacy of God's Word effectively impelled the *aggiornamento*, initiated by the council and embodied concretely in the lives of the members of the Sant'Egidio community. The primacy of the Word was strikingly evident at that vesper service, where reading and preaching from Scripture held symbolic pride of place.

It also appeared in the remark made by one of the leaders of the community with whom I spoke in Rome. "Before joining the Sant'Egidio community, I belonged to another group that also studied the Scriptures," he said. "However, I came to see a profound difference of approach. In my group Scripture served as a resource to support our own ideas and agenda. With Sant'Egidio, the process was to receive Scripture as God's Word of life to be discerned and embraced."

The second pillar, both of the council and of the community, is the "Constitution on the Liturgy." The deeper goal of the council's reform of the liturgy has too often been trivialized, both in language and celebration. What ought to be the very font of ongoing renewal, both personal and social, often stagnates through prayerlessness and ideology. By contrast, one experiences at Sant'Egidio the participants' real prayerfulness and heartfelt invocation of God's transforming Spirit.

Other features of the liturgical life of the community deserve noting. One observes a sensitivity to liturgical environment and its importance in evoking a sense of prayer. The place of assembly may be a baroque church or the meeting room of a large urban housing complex. But Eastern icons or a large replica of the cross of Saint Francis command attention and foster contemplation. In addition, the hymns sung sound with evangelical strength and objectivity. The words often are directly scriptural. One hymn enjoins leaving one's gift at the altar if reconciliation is first needed. Another confesses that when we have done all we could, we are but useless servants...a welcome relief from the "we, we, we boosterism" of much post-Vatican II hymnody. Worship is not reduced to workshop.

The third pillar of the council and of the community's life is the recovery of a more profound, more scriptural and patristic, understanding of church: its Magna Carta the "Constitution on the Church," *Lumen gentium*. Sant'Egidio strikes me as deeply ecclesial, but not narrowly ecclesiastical. Perhaps this is one of the charisms of its being a "lay association." But being ecclesial also allows it to avoid an equally narrow anticlericalism. In *Lumen gentium*, "people of God" connotes an inclusive whole: clergy, religious, and laity, rooted in a common baptismal dignity and a common call to holiness of life. Any mutual antagonism is only distraction and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

evasion of responsibility. The members of the church, like the church itself, witness not to self, but to Christ. Christ alone is the "light of the nations"; to witness to him and to announce the gospel in his name is the heart of the church's identity and mission. This real presence of the risen Christ is the only rock upon which church can be securely built and renewed.

Sant'Egidio, founded in Rome by young Roman students, shows the marks of the church of Rome at its best: deep local roots, wide outreach and concern. If, as many hold, the council's vision of church is that of a communion of local churches, then Sant'Egidio embodies this vision in miniature. Its own internal organization seeks to keep institutional structure at a minimum, relying on bonds of friendship and spiritual discernment and communion to unite its members.

Community liturgies, Scripture study, service projects bring together members who retain ultimate responsibility for their everyday lives, vocational commitments, and level of involvement. As a lay community, Sant'Egidio places a premium upon individual responsibility in community. Members of the community are married and single, mothers and fathers of families, students, professionals, and workers. Further, the hundreds of small communities scattered through the world take on distinct configurations and respond to the specific needs of their local cultures and regions. Sant'Egidio is a community of communities.

The great ecclesiologist, Yves Congar, so important an influence in the drafting of *Lumen gentium*, is a "spiritual associate" of Sant'Egidio. He has helped shape the community's ecclesial vision through his theology of the lay person in the church, as well as through his pioneering ecumenical commitment. In the ecumenical sphere, Sant'Egidio has taken up and extended the initiative of Pope John Paul II in bringing together leaders of the world religions at Assisi in 1986 in a day of prayer for peace. With the pope's encouragement, in each succeeding year the community has sponsored international ecumenical gatherings for prayer and reflection, with a particularly poignant gathering in Warsaw in 1989, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the World War II.

The fourth pillar of the council's achievement and Sant'Egidio's life finds authoritative expression in the "Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," *Gaudium et spes*. Openness toward and concern for "the world" remains a defining characteristic of Vatican II, reversing the too parochial comportment (however historically understandable) of Roman Catholicism since at least the French Revolution.

Integral to the spirituality of Sant'Egidio is the outreach to the poor, the marginalized, the homeless. In this regard, the figure of Francis of Assisi is clearly central to the spiritual vision and values of the community. Francis too discovered the gospel anew and lived it radically in the circumstances of his own age. The community honors Francis not merely by placing his cross in a prominent spot in its places of worship, but even more by making a privileged option for the poor in imitation of him.

In the "mother church" of the community in Piazza Sant'Egidio it comes as no surprise to find a chapel of the Blessed Sacrament in which the sacrament of Christ's Real Presence is reserved for adoration and prayer. But directly across from it stands another chapel. It represents Christ's Real Presence in the form of graphic icons of the poor, the homeless, the outcast of society. And it bears the stark scriptural reminder: "He had no place."

Sant'Egidio represents a remarkable and hopeful sign of spiritual renewal in the post-Vatican II church. The very young students of '68 are the still relatively young men and women of '94. In twenty-five years, they have navigated numerous shoals with amazing maturity and grace; though not, of course, without cost. Were I to venture a view as to how they have managed to hold so much in creative tension, I would point to their centering on the Real Presence of Christ. Jesus Christ present in the Scriptures and in the Eucharist; present in the community and in the poor: Lord of the church and Light of the world. The spirituality of the community seeks to realize ever more fully the varied modes of that Presence. Thus, when members of the community speak of the "soup kitchen" in Trastevere that serves 1,500 hearty meals a day, they use the richly evocative word *mensa*: table. It is also a word used to refer to the altar upon which the Eucharist is celebrated. Perhaps nothing better testifies to the eucharistic spirituality of Sant'Egidio than this catholic commitment to realize the body of Christ. □

National Catholic Reporter
NCR
For NCR subscription information, call 1-800-333-7373
THE INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC NEWSWEEKLY

Congratulations
to
Commonweal
for
70 years
of
faithful journalism.

Your friends at
National Catholic Reporter
115 East Armour Boulevard • Kansas City, Missouri 64111

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'COMMONWEAL' & THE 'CATHOLIC WORKER'

CONNECTS & DISCONNECTS

PATRICK JORDAN

Anniversaries are for celebrating, and major ones the more so. Twenty years ago, on *Commonweal*'s fiftieth anniversary, Fortress Press published Rodger Van Allen's durable history of the magazine's first half-century, *The Commonweal and American Catholicism*. Now Van Allen is at it again, celebrating *Commonweal*'s seventieth birthday with *Being Catholic: Commonweal from the Seventies to the Nineties* (Loyola University Press, 1993).

The new volume received extensive treatment earlier this year in the Spring issue of *Horizons* magazine. Three appreciative but critical reviews were followed by a response from Van Allen. Together, the four constitute a significant discussion of *Commonweal*'s status, aims, and achievements (or lack of them). One of the reviewers, William L. Portier, raises an important question about Van Allen's claim—made in the 1974 volume—that the journal founded by Michael Williams in 1924 "developed into perhaps the most significant lay enterprise and achievement in the history of American Catholicism." While Portier doesn't dispute the claim head-on, he admits there is part of his "evangelical self" that wants to ask, but "what about the *Catholic Worker*?"

In his response, Van Allen briefly describes some striking links between *Commonweal* and the *Catholic Worker*, but resists a full answer to Portier's question: to provide one would require perhaps another volume. Still, on the occasion of *Commonweal*'s seventieth anniversary, it is not out of place to offer some observations on the links, similarities, and contrasts between the two enterprises and on their contributions to the church and society.

Before there was a *Catholic Worker*, Dorothy Day (1897-1980), a free-lance journalist who had converted to Catholicism in 1927, wrote with some frequency for Catholic journals, including *Commonweal*, *America*, and the *Sign*. *Commonweal* published her reports from Mexico and New York's Lower East Side, as well as a short story. Some years later, George N. Shuster, *Commonweal*'s managing editor from 1928–37, would write that Day "was a very gifted writer, perhaps the most talented Catholic woman writer since Kate Chopin. She could have been one of the most brilliant and influential of *Commonweal*'s editors." But, he continued, Day had seen the dedication of the Communists, and she "wanted words and deeds expressing a deeper Christian concern than was theirs" to be her life's work (*America*, November 11, 1972). In a recent biography of Shuster (*George N. Shuster: On the Side of Truth*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), Thomas E. Blantz distinguishes between Day's emphasis on the life of active involvement in the social movements of the time and *Commonweal*'s more intellectual and journalistic bent. Day frequently recalled that it was Shuster who told Peter Maurin (1877-1949), the theorist and cofounder of the Catholic Worker movement, to look her up. That meeting took place in December 1932 and led to the first issue of the *Catholic Worker* in May 1933. But Blantz gives another insight into what prompted Shuster to suggest Maurin get in touch

PATRICK JORDAN, Commonweal's *managing editor, is a former managing editor of the* Catholic Worker.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with Day. "When the creative, unkempt, and slightly uncouth émigré French anarchist and poet, Peter Maurin, appeared at the *Commonweal* offices, Shuster realized that Maurin would be out of place and introduced him instead to Dorothy Day...thus inaugurating a long and fruitful collaboration."

In his *America* reflection, Shuster noted similarities and differences between the two undertakings. "The founders of *Commonweal* announced that the publication would be loyal to the church but that it would be edited and published by laymen independently of ecclesiastical control. This was a more revolutionary decision than it seemed to be at the time....The founders of the *Catholic Worker* did likewise. They would be Catholics, indeed committed ones, but they would be of and for the poor, who were to participate in the Worker's doctrine and effort."

From the beginning, the *Catholic Worker*'s emphasis on the active life, shared with the poor, gave it a tone and a purpose distinct from *Commonweal*'s efforts. Whereas *Commonweal* was founded, among other things, to implement the U.S. Catholic bishops' 1919 declaration, "On Social Reconstruction," the magazine sought to shape public opinion as a journal of opinion rather than as a social movement or its literary organ. While the editors of *Commonweal* wanted to "express the Catholic note" in influencing culture and politics, the *Catholic Worker* wished to challenge them. Thus historian Mel Piehl has written that the Catholic Worker movement was "the first major expression of radical social criticism in American Catholicism."

It seems clear that similar criticisms were also found more frequently in the pages of *Commonweal* after the founding of the *Catholic Worker*. Edward S. Skillin, *Commonweal*'s longtime editor and publisher (*see*, page 26), has written elsewhere that "Dorothy Day always served as an inspiration, reminding me of our duties as Christians toward our needy brothers and sisters....Because of her I developed a different point of view of what should be the social message of Catholicism." That view was clearly evident in Skillin's own writings on land reform, cooperative movements, and the link between the liturgy and social reconstruction. And whereas *Commonweal* and the *Catholic Worker* have diverged over critical issues, particularly on matters of war and peace and the wisdom of engaging the political process as it presently exists, both have clearly worked to bring Christian principles to bear on both.

Thus, in the 1930s, no other magazine in the country wrote as much about what was happening in Germany as *Commonweal*. The *Catholic Worker* also took a strong anti-Nazi position. In 1935, Catholic Workers in New York picketed the arrival of the German liner *Bremen* to protest Hitler's anti-Semitic laws. The following year, *Commonweal* led an unsuccessful attempt to boycott the 1936 Berlin Olympics. New York Auxiliary Bishop James Francis McIntyre, a confidant of Olympic organizer Avery Brundage, denounced *Commonweal*'s stand. The same year, H.A. Reinhold, a German priest who had been forced to flee the Nazis, arrived in New York. McIntyre refused to grant him priestly faculties because of Reinhold's anti-Franco stance. But the Catholic Worker allowed Reinhold to address its meetings and Shuster helped him secure an assignment in the diocese of Brooklyn. Over the years, Reinhold was to write frequently for both *Commonweal* and the *Catholic Worker*.

In 1937, Shuster left *Commonweal* because of founding editor Michael Williams's support for Franco in the Spanish Civil War. When Williams was forced to resign soon thereafter by the magazine's editorial council, Skillin and Philip Burnham, the new editors, shifted the magazine's stance toward neutrality. While the *Catholic Worker* had opposed the war from the beginning of the conflict, *Commonweal*'s principled shift cost it 20 percent of its subscribers.

In 1938, *Commonweal*'s editors wrote that the journal was "personalist," in the sense that it believed in "the priority of human beings over property and institutions." It supported workers' movements, cooperatives, and the right of farm laborers to organize—all stands shared with the *Catholic Worker*.

In May 1939, John C. Cort, who would eventually have a long association with *Commonweal* as both writer and editor, reported in the magazine about the founding meeting of a new group, the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. The meeting took place around a kitchen table at the New York Catholic Worker. Years later, Cort described in *Commonweal* (June 20, 1980) his first meeting with Dorothy Day in Boston in 1936. The young Harvard graduate was working as a reporter and went to hear Day speak. "Suddenly, bang, without ever to that moment having given it any serious thought at all, I decided to give up my $15-a-week job and join the Catholic Worker. What was it about her that so moved me?...I remember sitting in that dingy hall and saying to myself, 'This woman is getting a lot of fun out of life and I would like to get some of that for myself....'"

During the 1930s and '40s, not only Day and Cort wrote for *Commonweal*, but other Catholic Workers such as Ade Bethune, Bill Callahan, and Arthur Sheehan. *Commonweal* ran occasional ads for the *Catholic Worker* newspaper ("The *Catholic Worker* is openly and unashamedly the champion of the have-nots"), and for houses of hospitality chronically in need of support (a publishing practice that persists to this day). In the late '30s, *Commonweal* took a generally isolationist stand on European affairs, one that at times came very close to the nonviolent approach of the *Catholic Worker*. Writing in 1939 on the Germans, *Commonweal* editorialized that to overcome nazism, the people of Germany must "undergo a personal revolution and then reorganize their society on a more humane basis." The following year, Claire Huchet Bishop, a native of France and a frequent *Commonweal* contributor, took a pacifist stand when she opposed Jacques Maritain's call in *Commonweal* for French resistance to the Nazis. Bishop wrote that in the end nonviolent resistance was the only Christian way for the French to win.

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, however, *Commonweal* quickly changed its stand and, unlike the *Catholic Worker*, joined in support of the Allied effort. Still, throughout World War II it supported conscientious objectors, deplored the saturation bombing of cities, and at the end of the war decried the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Its editorial, "Horror and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shame" (August 24, 1945), and Dorothy Day's own famous condemnation in the *Catholic Worker*, "We Go on Record" (September 1945), were two powerful and immediate indictments of nuclear warfare.

Another connection between the two at this time was the 1941 arrival from France of the Russian émigré, Helene Iswolski, a friend of Nicholas Berdyaev and Emmanuel Mounier. Forced to flee the Nazis, Iswolski was welcomed to this country by C.G. Paulding, a *Commonweal* editor. She became one of Dorothy Day's closest friends and confidants, later living for a period at a Catholic Worker farm.

After the war, *Commonweal* welcomed to its small staff two new editors who had previously been associated with the Chicago Catholic Worker's newspaper and house of hospital-

Six decades of rewarding struggle

Can it actually be that I first approached *Commonweal* sixty-nine years ago? Fresh from Williams College, I considered this journal the most meaningful and persuasive expression of Catholicism that I knew. And, at least as far as this country is concerned, I still do.

Just then the one-year-old magazine's headquarters lay off a long, dark corridor in the old Grand Central Terminal building. Though *Commonweal*'s then business manager, John McCormick, received my quest for employment in a warm, friendly way, no opening was available. Back to square one for me.

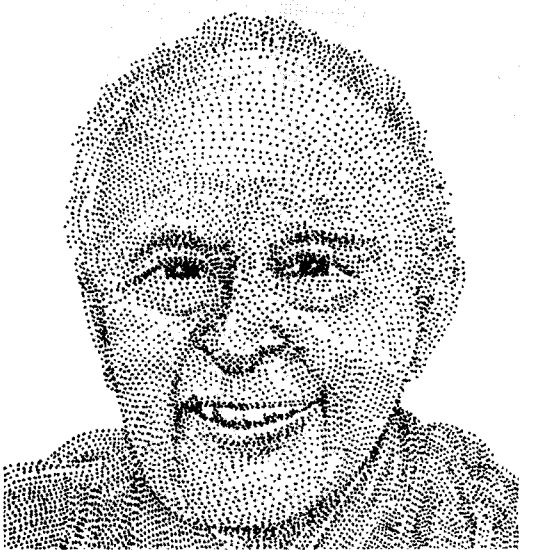
In 1933, eight years later, I returned to the charge, armed with a master's degree from Columbia in political science, and was at last taken on—as a volunteer in the magazine's circulation department. My sixty-one-year tenure had begun. By that date *Commonweal* had moved to a less prestigious address, 286 4th Avenue (now Park Avenue South). Our space was far from luxurious, but we stayed there for decades, during which I underwent my apprenticeship in journalism, combining work on the "business side" with editorial assignments, from April 1934 to March 1938.

The next time we moved, in 1961, was to 232 Madison Avenue, around the corner from the famed Morgan Library which, I am ashamed to admit, I managed to visit only two or three times in the course of our stay of twenty-five years. Our rent in that desirable area kept increasing, reaching such a pitch that we had to take flight in the 1980s. Happily we landed downtown on Dutch Street—which is really only a one-block alley, unknown even to veteran cab drivers, but reasonably well maintained and not badly lighted. An architect friend designed the space especially for us: it comprises an efficient suite of well-lighted offices plus a library meeting room topped by an overhead skylight.

Over the long period during which these various moves of habitat took place, the world scene was vastly changing. Editing a journal of opinion those days was no picnic; the challenges were many. The Depression stretched deep into the '30s until a war economy brought this country out of it. The Spanish Civil War provided the dramatic occasion for *Commonweal* to stand virtually alone against most of the American Catholic community, whose publications were ardently behind General Franco, except for the *Catholic Worker* and the *New World* of Chicago. With Hitler backing Franco and Stalin supporting the "Loyalists," *Commonweal* opted for neutrality, while calling for an end to the atrocities being perpetrated by both sides, a negotiated end of the war, and generous shipments of food and medicines to the women and children on both sides, victims of that tragic civil war. *Commonweal*'s statement was taken up by the nation's newspapers, so that our message reached millions of people and had a significant impact on American public opinion. Not surprisingly, though, during the next year the magazine lost one-fifth of its formerly loyal subscribers, a damaging blow.

Not long afterward came the onset of the national debate over intervention on the side of the Allies in their desperate combat to stop Adolf Hitler. There were differences among the magazine's editors on the subject. But when, toward the end of World War II, American airmen dropped the atom bombs on Japan, *Commonweal* was one of the first to condemn that appalling human devastation. In the '50s, the journal was a target of McCarthyism. As the Vietnam War progressed, *Commonweal* joined the ranks of protestors. (The invasions of Grenada and Panama, not to mention the still-extant Georgia's School of the Americas "antiguerrilla" training program which sent forth the murderous Salvadoran "hit-men" remain deeply troubling.)

The staff was heartened by the election of Pope John



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ity: John Cogley and James O'Gara. Both were to have distinguished careers with *Commonweal*. While neither was a pacifist nor subscribed to the *Catholic Worker*'s distributist economic or anarchic political views, both wrote with an awareness of the downtrodden that was based on their personal experiences in the Catholic Worker movement. O'Gara later noted that for him, the effect of Dorothy Day's emphasis on voluntary poverty and care for the poor was revolutionary.

Cogley analyzed the contrast between *Commonweal* and the *Catholic Worker* this way: On the *Worker*'s twenty-fifth anniversary, he wrote in *Commonweal* that "the movement which never sought power has had more influence on more influential Catholics than any other single force in the American church." Of Dorothy Day, he supposed that future historians

XXIII in 1958. Our enthusiasm grew when he convened the forward-looking Vatican Council II whose recommendations of greater roles for the laity, a more fully ecumenical spirit, and liturgy in the vernacular were inspiriting objectives which *Commonweal* had long pursued.

The universal interest in the council led to a phenomenal but brief rise in the magazine's circulation; its peak was almost 50,000 in 1968—well beyond any other sign of recognition of our efforts before or since. In the 1970s our readership began to fall back toward what had been a continuing limited figure which, with the help of newly proficient management, is at last steadily rising. The excitement was great while the council lasted.

On this seventieth anniversary it is appropriate to take a glance at *Commonweal*'s corporate history. Founding editor Michael Williams and a governing editorial council set up the Calvert Publishing Corporation which brought out *Commonweal*'s first weekly issue, November 12, 1924, featuring G. K. Chesterton on "Religion and Sex."

Their sponsorship continued until the spring of 1938 when Philip Burnham and I agreed to take over what had become a badly indebted enterprise. We had to settle with Grand Central for some back rent, and with the other creditors. It was hardly a propitious moment, with the country still bogged down in the Depression. But when you are young there is always hope and responsiveness to the encouragement of your peers. So we launched the Commonweal Publishing Company, offering stock at $10 a share.

That set-up lasted until 1984 when Commonweal Publishing Company gave way to the tax-exempt Commonweal Foundation of the present day. The new organization is self-contained with its own officers and directors and without owners or stockholders. Another fairly basic change had come with the issue of December 20, 1974, when rising postal rates forced a change of frequency; after long years as a weekly, the journal became a biweekly.

As I look back today at the magazine's storied existence, I can't figure out how the threadbare *Commonweal* kept meeting the steady drain on its limited funds and was able to continue to come out, week after week, especially in the 1940s and '50s. Our survival must only have been made possible through the help of God's providence.

Although their salaries were scarcely above "coolies' wages," the dedicated staff held on. Concern grew for the survival of the magazine. One of its devoted friends, Kathleen Casey Craig, kept buying shares of *Commonweal* stock at recurring critical moments—which she later gave back along with a single substantial anonymous donation.

Meanwhile, a mainly local ad hoc group called "Friends of the Commonweal" sprang into being, writing letters and holding fund-raising gatherings. In the 1970s this group expanded to become the nationwide Commonweal Associates, who to this day have been providing the difference between the magazine's business revenues and ever-mounting expenses. This sketchy account of our financial travail should make it clear why one of my two predominant memories of those sixty years is our unrelenting, if so far successful, struggle for survival.

The other dominating feeling about my long career at *Commonweal* is a much happier one. It is the memory of the wonderful series of companions who were embraced there, the enjoyment of such rewarding personal friendships. What a boon to be working for the building of the kingdom of God on earth, alongside such colleagues as the eminent George Shuster (who assigned my first book review and trained me in journalism). For he was followed down through the years by a glittering succession of editors and assistant editors extending to today's Peggy Steinfels of growing renown.

Permit me to indulge in a touch of name-dropping. Among others with whom I have been fortunate to share warm bonds of affection: Jacques Maritain (who encouraged Philip Burnham and me to take over *Commonweal*); the indomitable Dorothy Day; affable Msgr. Luigi Ligutti, of the National Catholic Rural Conference and the Vatican (who often dropped by to see me); Claire Huchet Bishop, the author of beloved children's books and an ardently dedicated ecumenist; an editor, the gentle Gouverneur Paulding (best man at my wedding to Jane and contributor of poetically nostalgic accounts of life in prewar Europe); Msgr. George Higgins of social action fame; Father H. A. Reinhold (whose impassioned writing on the cause of liturgical reform finally led to victory).

On rare occasions I got to meet, momentarily or several times, such luminaries as Evelyn Waugh, Senator Eugene McCarthy, Tom Burns of the distinguished London *Tablet*, Peter Maurin, cofounder of the Catholic Worker movement, Jim Wallis of *Sojourners*, Helene Iswolski, and T. S. Eliot (brought to our office by publisher and friend, Robert Giroux). All in all, a glorious company! How grateful I am for the abundance of memorable personal experience lavished upon me by *Commonweal*.

EDWARD S. SKILLIN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would judge American Catholics "by measuring our attitude toward her."

As for *Commonweal*, Cogley wrote later (in his book, *Catholic America*, 1973) that it was widely accused of being subversive and downright un-American: "It was blacklisted by many seminary rectors, kept under the counter by Catholic librarians, denounced bitterly from pulpits, and excoriated mercilessly in some of the diocesan papers." But despite that, Cogley continued, the magazine managed to exert an influence in the American church "all out of proportion to its small circulation," its positions often later being adopted by the wider Catholic community.

Dixie Partridge

November Turning

(for my mother at 70)

The thin language of air
thickens intangibly
as night rises from the ground
at my feet....
We know the white sleep,
the slurred speech of cold,
needletips of hoarfrost
on the wire fence.

Is this my life or yours?

A winter wind will rise
through this written landscape,
landlocked cottonwoods will sound
like surf, or like traffic
become permanent through our nights
since condemned easements set the highway
through the farm. The dry thistle
of land in disuse will crackle rumors
until the first muffling snow.

Something in the coming cold
has turned the light
toward you, and I see your dark hair
I combed once in the dusk
when you were injured by a runaway team.
Years from the land and I am moved
again by season and a future
of memory: your limp deeper, dragging;
graying hair more and more uncurled;
this blue pollen recurring on hills
the moments before nightfall—

a presence of things that come
without a ripple.

One lesson James O'Gara learned during his days at the Chicago Catholic Worker and brought to bear during his tenure at *Commonweal* was to face controversial issues head on. Since the *Chicago Catholic Worker* newspaper had not broken publicly with Day's absolute pacifist stand at the beginning of World War II, O'Gara wrote later that "this diffidence on the part of the nonpacifists was probably a mistake." Under Cogley and O'Gara, such diffidence was not apparent at *Commonweal*, whether the issues concerned church and state, theology, or the tactics of Senator Joseph McCarthy.

During the mid-1950s, when Catholic Workers mounted protests against civil defense drills meant to acclimate citizens to the possibility of nuclear war, *Commonweal* was the only Catholic publication to defend the protesters. Editor Edward S. Skillin wrote an open letter to the *New York Times* with John C. Bennett of *Christianity and Crisis* to defend the right to make such protests.

In the same years, *Commonweal*'s format and typography changed. For the first time it began regularly running line drawings on its cover and in the body of the magazine. Many of these were contributed by Rita Ham Corbin, an artist long associated with the *Catholic Worker*. There has always been an overlap of writers appearing in both journals, and it continued in the 1950s and '60s: Iswolski, Thomas Merton, Gordon Zahn, Michael Harrington, and Daniel and Philip Berrigan.

In 1960, during a debate with William F. Buckley, Jr., at a Paterson, New Jersey, church, *Commonweal* editor William Clancy had to defend Day and the *Catholic Worker* against Buckley's characterization that Day was "off to the left almost out of sight" and that the *Worker*'s positions were "grotesqueries." Clancy responded that while he himself did not subscribe to the *Catholic Worker*'s political anarchism, "Dorothy Day's vocation has been a heroic one," "a light to us all." He considered it a scandal that in 1960 "any Catholic can stand here and draw laughter from a Catholic audience at the expense of this heroic woman."

In 1954, in a long article in the *Catholic Worker* on Théophane Venard, a nineteenth-century French missionary to Vietnam, Day presciently warned against American intervention in that country. In 1947, *Commonweal* had supported French military action against Ho Chi Minh; in 1961 it editorialized that Vietnam was "the one auspicious place for the free world to make a stand" against the spread of communism. *Commonweal* changed its stand on U.S. involvement in Indochina only gradually. In 1963 it supported the American war effort, but it questioned whether "the goal can be achieved in a way which is just, humane, and sensitive to human rights." By 1967, *Commonweal* joined its voice to those who protested the war, judging the war's conduct to be unjust. Managing Editor Jack Deedy became one of the founding sponsors of the Catholic Peace Fellowship, initiated by Jim Forest and Tom Cornell of the Catholic Worker. In 1968, *Commonweal*'s then associate editor, Peter Steinfels, was arrested and jailed for protesting the war.

Today, the *Catholic Worker*'s Christian pacifist opposition to all war and war preparations remains at odds with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commonweal's just-war position, a fact that, for this particular writer, has presented frequent occasions for soul-searching. *Commonweal* continues to be a forum, however, where pacifists such as Eileen Egan, James Douglass, Michael True, Michael O. Garvey, and John Dear have published their views. For its part, over the years the *Catholic Worker* has reprinted pieces from *Commonweal* on pacifism and on the life of faith, and has invited *Commonweal* editors to speak at its meetings.

When Dorothy Day died in 1980, historian David O'Brien wrote in *Commonweal* that Day was "the most significant, interesting, and influential person in the history of American Catholicism." Since that time, the Catholic Worker movement has continued to expand in size and diversity, as a recent review in *Commonweal* by Robert Gilliam indicated (June 3, 1994). But that diversity and the loss of its remarkable founders have had an inevitably unsettling effect on the movement. In a 1988 *Commonweal* article, Gordon Zahn broached serious questions about the future of the C.W. Zahn reported that some Catholic Worker houses were taking liberties with the celebration of the Eucharist, and pointed out that on matters of faith and discipline, Dorothy Day would never promote her private judgment in such matters if they were at variance with the church's magisterium. Zahn concluded that the present-day Catholic Worker movement could do no better than to follow Day's lead, and that not to do so would threaten its unique character and distinct contribution. Such questions continue to surface in the movement, as they do throughout the church in general.

To return to Professor Portier's original question and Rodger Van Allen's response, it is apparent that both *Commonweal* and the *Catholic Worker* paper and movement have played significant roles in the life of twentieth-century American Catholicism. The latter has done so as a movement aimed at rejuvenating society in the light of gospel principles and a shared life with the poor; the former as a journal of opinion meant to challenge society and the church. Without either—let alone both—society and the church would have been decidedly diminished.

No one who has ever been associated with the Catholic Worker movement, been acquainted with its remarkable personages, or read the pages of its various papers has remained unchallenged, untouched, or uninspired. It is clear that *Commonweal* itself has been so moved. Conversely, *Commonweal* has practiced protest and offered a different but essential type of hospitality by welcoming distinct and sometimes quite divergent views in its pages.

In the future, both *Commonweal* and the *Catholic Worker* face significant challenges. The Catholic Worker movement has yet to successfully portage into the post-founders' era. It should come as no surprise that an anarchist-leaning, decentralized movement would find it difficult to replicate the focus, energy, discipline, and inspiration provided in her lifetime by Dorothy Day. Regional meetings of Catholic Worker houses, and a wide variety of Catholic Worker newspapers and newsletters—from such various cities as Houston, Saint Louis, Worcester, and Los Angeles as well as New York—seem to be the means the movement is developing to clarify its aims and provide intellectual and spiritual grounding. Both the "catholic" and the "worker" of its title are areas that need definition. On the one hand, how does the *Worker*'s Depression-era critique of industrialized society and the nature of work apply in a post-Communist, post-industrial, computerized mass society? More essentially, how does the movement remain Catholic? Some Catholic Workers, troubled by their fellow Workers' lack of clear identification with the church, have sought to enshrine theological restorationism, misrepresenting Dorothy Day's love for the church as a form of blind obedience. At the other extreme, some Catholic Workers have taken the course of theological libertarianism, attempting to use Day's repeated stands against the status quo as a means of justifying their own divergence from church teachings.

In a very real sense, there is today a struggle going on for the soul of the Catholic Worker movement. Outsiders can only hope that those who carry on the daily life of the movement will continue to anchor themselves in the Gospels and the sacraments, the lives of the saints, nonviolence, the justice preached in the Scriptures, and charity toward one another. The hallmark of Dorothy Day was not simply the strength of her character, intellect, or views, but her clarity of soul and her delight in what she was doing. She genuinely appreciated those with whom she lived and worked, made great efforts to forgive and be reconciled with those she had offended, and found a ready joy in all things beautiful. All of this—in the midst of unceasing hardship—was based on prayer and faith. Day's example, as John Cort once remarked in these pages (September 24, 1982), is a standard to be reckoned with: "I most firmly believe that all social reformers, without exception, should ponder well Day's words: 'We live in a time of gigantic evil. It is hopeless to think of combating it by any other means than that of sanctity. To think of overcoming such evil by material means, by alleviations, by changes in the social order only—all this is utterly hopeless.'"

The challenges *Commonweal* faces are different but finally not unrelated: How to develop a language with which to communicate the Catholic vision with clarity and resonance? How to bring those insights into play in an in-your-face era where group antagonisms are promoted and self-interest reigns? How to restore a sense of common bonds and renewed commitment to the common good in such an age? And how to keep the magazine afloat on limited resources when fewer people seem interested in substantive reading?

Over thirty-five years ago, Edward S. Skillin wrote that "our country has need of media that attempt to relate our present characteristics, and tendencies for the future, to the noblest traditions of our people." The need for such independent and critical journals of opinion as *Commonweal* is as strong today as in 1924. But if it is to celebrate significant anniversaries in the future, *Commonweal* will need many new readers and generous supporters. The same is true, of course, of the Catholic Worker movement. Here's hoping we and future generations of American Catholics are up to the challenge, and that historians like Rodger Van Allen will be there to tell the story. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BEATEN TO A PULP

TARANTINO'S 'FICTION'

Maybe you have to be able to see through Quentin Tarantino before you can enjoy him. Like all his previous movies, *Pulp Fiction* is packed with violent larcenies, shoot-outs, drug deals, mob executions, gangland politicking, and (a Tarantino specialty) heavy-duty, sadistically gloating speeches made by hitmen to their victims just before the bullet to the brain is dispatched. No wonder that this latest Hollywood *wunderkind* has been labeled the "hot high priest of film ultra-violence," "the Sultan of Sadism," and so forth.

Yet *Pulp Fiction* has about as much to do with actual criminality or violence as *Cyrano de Bergerac* with the realities of seventeenth-century France or *The Prisoner of Zenda* with Balkan politics. I make these comparisons respectfully, for this movie gives us precisely what the title of an earlier Tarantino script promised (however ironically) but didn't deliver: true romance.

Any romance must have an element of sham in its make-up. It comes with the territory and helps make the territory a tourist attraction. The gangsters of *Pulp Fiction*, taken as criminal studies, are strictly factitious. Their tough talk is wise-guy literate, media-smart, obscenely epigrammatic. Tarantino gangsters must be couch potatoes and video fiends when they're not slaughtering each other: they use the Fonz and the cute pig from "Green Acres" as reference points and can spot the difference between Marilyn Monroe and Mamie Van Doren impersonators. I can't imagine one of these hoods reading anything as workaday as a racing form, but I bet all of them subscribe to *Variety*.

In short, Tarantino gangsters are actors in the flimsiest of underworld disguises. No Frank Sinatra heist flick (*Oceans 11*, say, or *Robin and the 7 Hoods*) was so flauntingly unauthentic. The conversation of these hooligans may be spiked with the argot of Hollywood players and hustlers, but their lives are utterly devoid of the grunginess, boredom, pettiness, and the close attention to shady economics that you find in the memories and histories of real criminals. If gangsters really had this sort of wit, they'd be writing screenplays.

But the sham of romance serves the truth of romance. *Cyrano de Bergerac* may not be a believable portrait of a poet-soldier in the age of Richelieu, but he is a truthful embodiment of a chivalric ideal. Tarantino's gangsters are mere marionettes of violence but their dance is gripping because it's performed in the Theater of Destiny that is Tarantino's vision of life. When the hit men Jules and Vincent (Samuel Jackson and John Travolta) saunter out of a restaurant at the film's conclusion, we know that one of them is doomed and the other saved. Whence the doom? Whence the salvation?

In *Pulp Fiction*, significance saves. Refusing to see the significance of events, dismissing all circumstance as happenstance, refusing to believe that you are undergoing your own destiny can doom you. (So you have a destiny anyway—a horrid one!) Of course, the web of one's destiny always gets tangled with the webs of others, and a good part of the romantic excitement of *Pulp Fiction* lies in the way Tarantino lets us have a bird's-eye view of overlapping fates.

The movie is told in five chapters and a prologue:

Prologue: A husband-and-wife stick-up team (Tim Roth and Amanda Plummer) sit in a restaurant and discuss over coffee the best sorts of places to rob. The wife proposes that the very place they're in would be ideal. The husband agrees and they spring into action. End of prologue; the credits roll.

Chapter 1: Two hit men (Jackson and Travolta) murder some drug dealers who have cheated their boss, a drug lord named Marcellus. Then something happens to these killers that makes them return to headquarters. The pair look bemused, wrung-out, almost slaphappy. What happened? We don't find out until chapter 4.

Chapter 2: Travolta is ordered to chaperone Marcellus's sexy wife (Uma Thurman) while the boss is away on business. Travolta and Thurman are mutually attracted and mutually wary; then a near-catastrophe makes sex impractical and unthinkable.

Chapter 3: After accepting a bribe from Marcellus to take a dive, boxer Bruce Willis bets big money on himself to win and proceeds to massacre his opponent. He flees Marcellus's vengeance, then recklessly returns to his apartment to recover his dead father's watch. As a result, the boxer brushes up against death three times, once at Travolta's hands.

Chapter 4 brings us back to the hit men at the end of chapter 1. It is now shown that Travolta and Jackson were almost killed at the conclusion of their assignment, but their lives were spared. Jackson decides to reform his life, Travolta shrugs and is determined to go on as before.

Chapter 5: The two hoods have taken their philosophical argument to a restaurant which may look strangely familiar. Suddenly, Tim Roth and Amanda Plummer spring into action. We are back in the prologue! And soon Roth is moving toward Jackson for his money or his life. Jackson cocks a pistol under the table. But can he really kill a man now that he's promised God to turn over a new leaf?

"I just finished this whodunit. Turned out to be me."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The effect all this time-hopping has on our sympathies is both discombobulating and exhilarating. Travolta, for instance, is a killer in part 1. But in part 2 he's at the center of the action, is in peril, and, willy-nilly, we feel for him. But in part 3, Travolta is a killer again and this time...hey! he's trying to rub out *this* episode's hero, Bruce Willis. Then, in parts 4 and 5, Travolta is again in trouble, but he seems sullen and clownish compared with Jackson who is undergoing a spiritual conversion. And besides, because 4 and 5 take place *before* the events of chapter 3, we know how Travolta is going to behave toward Willis. How deeply can we sympathize with this young man? How thoroughly can we detest this young killer?

The script is put together with a jeweler's precision and makes the writing of every American film I've seen in the past year—even *Quiz Show*—seem like so much child's play. A couple of examples of Tarantino's canniness:

Chapter 3 opens with a flashback of Bruce Willis as a boy receiving his dead father's watch from a soldier who suffered with the father in a Viet Cong prisoner-of-war camp. The officer explains why he's been so zealous in delivering the father's bequest: "When you're together with someone in a pit of hell, you owe something to that person." Later, Willis will find himself in his own "pit of hell" with his worst enemy, Marcellus, as fellow prisoner. Willis gets a chance to escape and leave Marcellus to suffer a slow, horrible demise. Why can't he bring himself to leave? Then the words come back to us just as they are probably coming back to him: "...you owe something to that person."

That's a compassionate moment but a more typical example of Tarantino's scabrousness immediately follows. Willis looks for a weapon to use against the serial killers. He's in a pawnshop, so there are several choices. He finds a hammer and hefts it. Not bad. But he exchanges it for a baseball bat. Better. Then he picks up a chainsaw. Better and worse. The audience starts to titter nervously. But wait, Willis has spotted something else on a high shelf and reaches for it. Samurai sword. The horrified laughter this sequence gets from the audience is the kind of reaction Oliver Stone tries to evoke repeatedly in *Natural Born Killers* (which is a drastic rewrite of a Tarantino script) with scant success. Tarantino achieves it time and again with fiendish accuracy.

Tarantino is a deft director of actors but for the most part he succeeds by getting his well-cast players to tread familiar ground. The exception is Samuel L. Jackson. He's played tough guys before but this one he takes to a higher plane. He makes Jules an almost Shakespearean reservoir of strength, cruelty, righteousness, intellectual showiness, loyalty, sadism, and compassion. He is titanic.

Tarantino is also adroit with the camera. Jackson and Travolta arrive outside an apartment only to discover that they're too early to execute a hit. "Let's hang back," Jackson says, and they do, literally, by walking away from the camera down a hallway. In long shot, they carry on a innocuous, funny conversation. Finally, it's time for the kill. "Let's get into character." They walk into close-up and are once again frightening.

Or at least as frightening as gangsters can be in a Tarantino movie. The cinematic flourishes, the pop references, the movie-movie in-jokes, the glamour of the performers, the self-conscious hipness of the dialogue—all this cushions the violence, makes it bearable, and, yes, even glamorizes it.

"Let's get into character." Indeed. These are actors being popped, not characters of substance. Go see *Menace II Society* or *Good Fellas* if you want the grime of crime. In Tarantino's hands, pulp fiction becomes sheer romance.

RICHARD ALLEVA

MEDIA

NO FALL CLASSIC

BURNS'S 'BASEBALL'

It's an irony that has already been repeated to death, but it bears repetition one more time, because it isn't *just* an irony but, I think, a key moment in the underground, psychic, metaphorical life of the republic:

In 1994, for the first time in ninety years, America didn't get a World Series; instead it got Ken Burns's massive documentary, "Baseball." No games on ABC or CBS or NBC; but, on PBS, a plangent history of the game itself that was, obviously, originally meant as a love letter and that—in the event—is most likely an elegy.

Some things need not be belabored: like, for instance, that the players *and* owners, in an orgy of selfishness right out of Neronian Rome, irretrievably polluted a century-old national myth—the myth that *this* game, of all games, was not just another raree-show, but was based on a contract of common passion *for the game itself* between the players and the spectators. Basketball and hockey, in the wake of the baseball strike, have made down-tools-and-walk noises, too. But, though it's venal, it just isn't the same: these guys we *knew* were secular.

And some things probably should not be belabored. Even the most enthusiastic preshowing reviews of "Baseball" observed that it was all a tad overdone. Nine almost unbroken nights of prime-time; celebrity voices from Jason Robards to Studs Terkel to Carly Simon; and tight-close-up interviews with people like Thomas Boswell and George Will, who *do* understand the game, but also interviews with celebrities whose only reason for being included is that they are famous and that one time or another they went to a game. "Baseball" took up about as much time as the PBS broadcast of Wagner's *Ring* cycle. And although I, for one, would rather sit through a 3-to-2 game played by bush-leaguers than, ever again, through a complete *Das Rheingold*, nevertheless one detects—as Henry James would have said—a certain fatal lack of proportion, a failure to grasp the dimensions of the *done* thing.

In other words: it's a wonderful and maddeningly flawed work, and its most salient flaws are an uncannily precise index of what went wrong with baseball itself. And in *one* word, what went wrong with baseball is what made "Baseball" possible: TV.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I wanna get back in the ball game."

I was one of those few Americans who were not dazzled by Brother Burns's previous documentary, "The Civil War" (we're forming a support group with the folks who thought *Dances with Wolves* was boring and those who found *The Bridges of Madison County* tooth-softening saccharine—sue us). But it sure as hell was epic—whatever you may happen to think "epic" means (in Burbank I think it's something like, "Big, baby—Big! Emmys!"). At any rate, Burns, in interviews before "Baseball" ran, had read and trusted his own press releases, comparing his long hymn to the national pastime to the work of Homer—though Pindar's Olympian odes would have been an analogy more in the ball park.

The fellow has a D.W. Griffith complex. Griffith, the greatest of silent film directors, transformed forever the art of the movies, but was plagued by a Protestant/universalist compulsion to turn whatever he was filming into a Big Statement on Everything: these cosmic hungers are part, of course, of being gifted at all. But they are, in general, not to be trusted.

Thus, "Baseball" establishes eloquently what we had known all along, that the game is, along the hidden pathways of the national unconscious, not just a symbol but an *icon* of America itself (the green, diamond-shaped fields are, as Robert Coover says in his novel, *The Universal Baseball Association*, the true cathedrals of the country). So overweening is its moral urgency, though, to make baseball a *template* for the social history of the American century that Burns's documentary becomes—I don't know another way to say this—spiritually muscle bound. A salient, and a very delicate case in point is its treatment of the crucial figure, Jackie Robinson.

When Branch Rickey hired Robinson for the Brooklyn—the only real—Dodgers, the first African-American in the majors, it was a moment of real glory in our long national struggle with racism. And Robinson, in his first years with the team, bore disgusting racial slurs—and assaults—with a courage that demands the term, "heroic." The problem is that "Baseball"—with the best of intentions—concentrates on the racist terrorism to the near exclusion of two equally crucial facts: first, that Robinson was a splendid player by any standards (surely what *he* would have wanted emphasized); and second—and this *matters*—that, for all the ugliness, baseball abolished apartheid almost a decade before the U.S. Supreme Court even began to. Far from a template of our common life, the game at its best was more like a dream, a ritual enactment of what we could be. "Baseball," fine as it is, somehow manages to miss that. And it misses it, I think, because TV is exactly the wrong medium for the game altogether.

Look. It's a pastoral game: Shakespeare could have written a helluva romance about it. It's made up of languors punctuated by ice-needles of precise action, a game you can *not*, as the saying goes, play with clenched teeth. Even its time is metaphysical: not a set number of minutes on the stopwatch, but three men up and three men down twice in an inning nine times, *however* long that takes in "real" time, and I'm not even dealing with ties here. It's not only not telegenic, it's subtly antitelegenic.

Our secular sports, basketball, football, hockey—for God's sake, volleyball—are. They are the stuff of soundbites and instant replays, electron-streams of uninterrupted busyness, leaving room for everything except reflection. (You can watch an 80-yard punt return over and over, like an MTV video; but how can you appreciate the replay of a game-winning single without watching the whole inning—or the whole game?) My science-fiction prediction is that, eventually, they'll be played in sportsdomes before ten cameras and no live spectators at all. It would ease the crowd-control problem, and not make much difference otherwise. With baseball—when it *was* a game—that would be as unthinkable as lights at Wrigley Field.

Burns's film is nowhere more acute than in its observation that the decline of the game—and let's all admit that the game is now, in any real sense, defunct—began in the fifties, with the coast-to-coast televising of major league play. Loyalties were subtly undermined; advertising megabucks began to affect and, Faustianly, corrupt the biz of the game; and (though Burns doesn't say this) TV-fixated America discovered, uncomfortably, that watching the game in the den with a Bud wasn't as much *fun* as schlepping out to the local minor-league diamond. Good news for the NFL, that.

Let me be clear. "Baseball" is a lovely piece of work. But its sadness is that it celebrates the myth of our essential game in and through the very medium that is the enemy of all those values—of leisure, of small-community solidarity, of unashamed trust in the love of sport *for* sport—that the game once incarnated.

Look at how many films we've had about the game: *Bull Durham*, *The Natural*, *The Babe*, *A League of Their Own*, *Field of Dreams*, etc. What they all have in common with "Baseball," I think, is an unspoken consent that we now believe in the game—as the Middle Ages believed in Camelot—only as a metaphor for what we once might have been, but no longer are. Remember *Field of Dreams*? How grown men cried at the end? It was my wife, Celeste, who pointed out after we saw it what a mean film it is. "So they bring back all the great baseball legends," she said, "and the big damn triumph is that Kevin Costner will get rich *charging admission* to see the ghosts of the heroes."

Copy—with respect—to Ken Burns. Lou Gehrig wept.

FRANK McCONNELL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Testing the Gospel story

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON

In an earlier issue of this journal (April 24, 1992), I reviewed the first volume of Father Meier's (now projected three-volume) work on the historical Jesus, together with J.D. Crossan's, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. My review was fundamentally positive concerning the approach Meier had taken. Now we meet the author a little further down what he calls a "long and dusty road."

The path toward the historical Jesus indeed appears lengthy. The first volume used some 500 pages to bring the reader through prolegomena and childhood. The present volume uses some 1,000 pages of text (about 400 of which consist of notes) to deal with three aspects of Jesus' ministry that Meier designates as Mentor (John the Baptist), Message (the future and inbreaking kingdom of God), and Miracle. Given the pace and bulk to this point, the reader may be forgiven for failing to share Meier's optimism that everything else can be done in one more volume.

Meier is aware that the size of the project may overwhelm its intelligibility, and provides transition essays at the beginning and end of this volume: one recapitulates the contents of the first volume, while the other summarizes the argument of the present volume and suggests what will follow in the third. He is also helpful to the reader in many small ways: while not brilliant, his prose is clear and serviceable for a long journey; his tone is calm and fair; his frequent small recapitulations and summaries help the reader maintain a sense of direction.

Book discussed in this essay

A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume Two: Mentor, Message and Miracle, *by John P. Meier, Doubleday, $40, 1,055 pp.*

The book follows with unusual consistency the clear method described in the first volume. Meier considers the four canonical Gospels to be the most reliable sources for the historical Jesus. But since their narrative order is one shaped by the respective evangelists, the historian is reduced to locating what *elements* in the Gospels can claim a source in Jesus, or as Meier puts it, "possible signals of material going back to Jesus," and what broad *patterns* in Jesus' ministry these might suggest. The Gospel materials are assessed according to the criteria of historicity: multiple attestation, discontinuity, coherence, embarrassment, and so forth.

In sum, Meier's quest is for those pieces of the Gospel that can, by strict canons of scientific inquiry, be verified with a high degree of probability. His approach is consistently to locate the pieces which best satisfy all the criteria—and thereby are most probable—and then to argue outward to other pieces and patterns which, while incapable of standing alone, cohere with the pattern or piece established as more probable.

Thus, it is probable in the highest degree that John was a significant religious figure in first-century Palestine in his own right, that he exercised a ministry of baptism, and that his message had an eschatological character. It is also highly probable that Jesus was baptized by John. The connections between these points, however, and their possible significance, become much more difficult to establish.

Likewise, Meier can state convincingly that Jesus proclaimed the rule of God; with considerable probability he can claim that this proclamation had a future dimension; and with somewhat less probability, he can suggest that it also involved a present realization. Finally, Meier demonstrates that the element of miracle working is so pervasive in every strand of tradition that it must be said to be a historically reliable part of the Gospels. When it comes to determining the historicity of certain kinds of miracles or specific reports of miracles, however, the level of probability drops off sharply. The quest of the historical Jesus is here, in short, the quest

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON *is professor of New Testament at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University. He is the author of* The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation, *and* Faith's Freedom: A Classic Spirituality for Contemporary Christians *(both Fortress).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the "historically verifiable Jesus."

There is much to praise in the book in addition to Meier's clarity of exposition and consistency in method. His erudition is remarkable. There is little that has been said touching on the gospel traditions that Meier does not mention, deliberate, and adjudicate. As an author whose work entered the conversation tangentially at one point, I can attest to his evenhandedness and fairness even at points of disagreement.

Two substantive points of emphasis deserve special attention. First, Meier's attention to the eschatological dimension of both John and Jesus provides a helpful antidote to scholars who have tended to eliminate the eschatological from Jesus' ministry in favor of a (only slightly Jewish) Cynic philosopher. Second, his 500 pages devoted to the tradition of Jesus as miracle-worker is a useful counterbalance to scholars who find these traditions embarrassing and reduce Jesus to a collection of his sayings. In particular, Meier's setting up of the discussion and his sorting through the various issues attaching themselves to the picture of Jesus as wonder-worker is impressive.

Some aspects of the book are less praiseworthy. It seems clear that the concern to consider every option and discuss every opinion—while laudatory in the abstract—increasingly weighs down Meier's work with a load of lore disproportionate to its yield in insight. The discussions of individual passages are dense enough. But the reader is also required to work through secondary discussions of subsidiary issues without end. Not all of these are necessary. Not all of them are helpful. I understand and applaud Meier's concern for balance and a fair exposition of the evidence. I am not convinced, however, that a prudential pruning of the scholarly by-plays might not improve both the accessibility of the book and the clarity of its very argument.

The problem becomes most acute, perhaps, in the discussion of the individual miracle accounts. The yield is mostly negative. Meier makes a case for the historical probability of three exorcisms, three healings of the blind, and two healings of the paralyzed. Working through the author's reasons why other candidates were not given the same rating, the reader is inadvertently exposed to the kinds of circularity in argument that unavoidably attend such discussions.

Concerning Meier's overall approach, at least so far as we have seen it in these first two volumes, two sets of questions appear to be appropriate. One set of questions concerns the difficulty of remaining within his self-defined framework; the other concerns the strength of the claims made by the project as such. I pose them not because Meier's book is an unworthy intellectual effort but precisely because it is so careful, so consistent, and so methodologically self-conscious.

Meier explicitly acknowledges the fragility of historical reconstruction. As a good historian, he also recognizes that degrees of probability rather than certainty characterize the game. He also recognizes that his chosen method can yield only pieces and patterns. Yet pieces and patterns do not really constitute history. The need for narrative and the need for meaning press even this careful scholar to draw what appear to this reader as false inferences, in a tendency that might be called "creeping certainty."

Reasonably enough, Meier prefers to work from more probable pieces to less probable ones. He chooses the strongest case in a class on which to base a claim: a piece, for example, that meets all the criteria in an obvious fashion. In the light of that piece, he considers other pieces in the same class, pieces that on their own do not meet the criteria as fully. The principle of coherence, however, is heavily invoked to connect the bare bones and provide some sense of flesh. That principle can be stated roughly as: "If by the rigorous application of all the criteria, we show that it is highly probable that Jesus did or said X, then it makes sense that those elements agreeing with X are also probable." In strict terms, such an inference is illegitimate. An element that on its own evidence is merely possible does not become probable because it agrees with something that has been shown to be probable. It simply remains possible.

And even if we did show the high probability that Jesus did two different things, we are not thereby allowed to understand these things in the light of each other, as though they were mutually interpretive. The reason is clear: we are lacking the knowledge of all the other things said and done that provide the only real context for the interpretation of specific deeds or sayings. Thus, it is historically *possible* that Jesus' exorcisms and his proclamation of the kingdom of God are connected, but we cannot infer that connection, or state it as probable, simply from determining the probability that Jesus did both things.

Above all, the method espoused by Meier does not allow us to move from the bald statement, "Jesus probably said this thing," to inferences concerning what Jesus might have thought or felt or chosen in saying that thing. But, in fact, Meier does make such inferences: "Why, then, does Jesus choose this unusual phrase...[it] indicates that he takes with utter seriousness the observation made above: the kingdom of God is simply a more abstract way of speaking of God as king." The method does not allow us to say "Jesus took with utter seriousness." On the next page, Meier states, "Nourished as he was on the Scriptures of Israel, Jesus was quite aware that God as creator had always been king...." But it is impossible for his method to reach "Jesus was aware." A final example: "We begin to see why Jesus was not interested in and did not issue pronouncements about concrete social and political reforms, either for the world in general or for Israel in particular...." There are two problems with each of these statements: they imply access to Jesus' internal consciousness that Meier's method could never provide; and they assume information drawn from the Gospel narratives but not yet in any way established by Meier's strict criteria of historicity.

We see, therefore, that the synthetic picture of Jesus that Meier begins to advance in this volume, and sketches with considerable confidence in his final essay, owes more than a little to a process of false inference, and to the contribution made by the Gospel narratives and interpretations that the method began by explicitly eschewing.

A final set of questions concerns the yield of all this impressive effort that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Meier has pursued with such diligence, intelligence, and integrity. I note with some bemusement that the advance readers' copy I am using for this review trumpets the volume as "John Meier's quest for the real Jesus." This is a claim that Meier himself has repeatedly and explicitly rejected! He knows that his method will not yield "the real Jesus."

The harder question is whether it can yield anything more than "the historically verifiable Jesus." I think probably not. This method enables the examiner to reach elements that probably went back to Jesus. That is, they are the "most certainly historical" elements of the Gospel. But "most certain" in historiography means simply "most probable."

As I have suggested, even if we are able to determine pieces of the gospel tradition that most probably go back to Jesus, we are not thereby allowed to make inferences from a *collection of facts* to the sequence, frequency, proportion, relative importance, and above all, meaning of these facts. It should be observed further that what can be verified historically (that which is "most probable" in historical terms) is not at all necessarily what is most central or pivotal to Jesus' ministry, any more than we can deduce from what is unique to a person what is essential to that person.

Things that can be determined by historical methods, furthermore, are rendered neither more nor less real by such determination than those things that cannot be determined by historical methods. All that is affected is the quality of our knowledge of those things. Nor is our knowledge made greater or better or even more certain. It has simply become more "historical" in character.

What is most important about any human character—and this holds as true for Meier and me and Socrates as it does for Jesus—is precisely what eludes the methods of critical historiography, namely the *meaning* of that character. One can show that Jesus exorcized demons, spoke in parables, and spoke of God's rule, but *from this evidence* one cannot say why he so acted, or what it signified to him. The problem here is not the lack of data but the intrinsic inaccessibility of meaning, which must derive from the interpretation of the facts rather than the facts themselves.

I think Father Meier's achievement is this: against all the crazy theories that pretend to be critical yet are not, and press the pieces into any number of dubious shapes, he shows that several of the pieces that the Gospel narratives emphasize as important to the figure of Jesus have a very high degree of historical verifiability. Not a meager accomplishment. I suspect, however, that Meier hoped also to finish the quest for the historical Jesus by finally doing it right. And he may do so, precisely by revealing how, when it is done right, it does not get us where we wanted to go.

I suspect that when the dust settles—even on this long road—we shall find that the "historical Jesus" is just where he was all the time: in the fourfold testimony and interpretation of the Gospel narratives. For, if what is essential to a person is not the facts of when and where or the facts of what was said and done, but rather the *meaning* of those facts for those whose experience and memory of the person was also part of their historical reality, then there is no place else for us to look. □

Yale Institute of Sacred Music
Worship and the Arts

Marguerite L. Brooks	Choral Conducting
Margot E. Fassler	Religion & Music
Peter S. Hawkins	Religion & Literature
Paul V. Marshall	Worship & Pastoral Theology
Thomas Murray	Organ
Thomas H. Schattauer	Liturgy & Worship
Victoria R. Sirota	Church Music

The Institute is a center for interdisciplinary graduate study in music performance and history, theology, liturgy and the arts, based in the School of Music and the Divinity School at Yale University.

Master of Music/Master of Arts in Religion
Master of Arts in Music and Worship
Master of Sacred Theology
Master of Divinity Master of Music
Master of Musical Arts Doctor of Musical Arts

Full tuition scholarships are available.
For admissions and financial aid information contact:
Ruth Lackstrom
Yale Institute of Sacred Music
409 Prospect Street New Haven, CT 06511 (203) 432-5180

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Faith & learning on the Catholic campus

FROM THE HEART OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH
Catholic Higher Education and American Culture
David J. O'Brien
Orbis Books, $34.95, 212 pp.

George M. Marsden

From a Protestant perspective, American Catholic higher education is puzzling. At a distance, Catholic colleges and universities might seem to be drifting with little regard for their being in the same waters that swept all the leading Protestant schools far from their religious identities. Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that "inadvertence" is among the least appropriate words to apply to the process of religious change that has marked the past forty years. The question of Catholic identity in America is passionately debated on campuses and has been for more than a generation.

Yet the leadership that encourages these discussions seems almost immobilized by its own ambivalence on the issue. On the one hand, the administrators of Catholic colleges and universities vigorously insist that their schools are still Catholic, perhaps even, as Notre Dame's Father Theodore Hesburgh argued in 1986, "more professedly Catholic than ever." On the other hand, when there are rumblings from the Vatican, most notably *Ex corde ecclesiae*, suggesting that bishops ought to exercise some oversight of Catholic academic theologians, Catholic administrators are of virtually one voice in insisting that such practices could not possibly apply to the American setting. Catholic colleges and universities, we are assured, are not Catholic in that sense.

David J. O'Brien provides a valuable overview of the contexts for assessing these ongoing discussions. An American historian at the College of the Holy Cross, he has been an active observer and participant in Catholic higher education discussions since he began teaching in 1965. Most recently he drew on that expertise to chair the committee which prepared the mission statement for Holy Cross.

As his title suggests, O'Brien thinks it is a mistake to talk about American Catholic higher education outside the context of the American Catholic church. One of his chief complaints is that too much of the discussion has been either too abstract or too institutional, forgetting that the future of American Catholic education is inextricably bound to the American Catholic experience which shapes the church. The American Catholic church, he suggests, can not act without the voluntary support of American Catholics and so American Catholic education cannot survive unless the American Catholic community sustains such an enterprise.

Providing very helpful summaries both of the changes in Catholic higher education since the 1950s and of recent debates on the Catholic character of higher education, O'Brien suggests that too often the debates have been framed in a simplistic context of "secularization." A much more useful alternative, he argues, would be "Americanization." That word far better suggests the ambiguities of the topic. During the 1950s and 1960s most Catholics welcomed many dimensions of Americanization as they were at last accepted as full participants in the dominant culture. Now, however, many conservative Catholic critics talk of Americanization as equivalent to secularization, meaning that the chief task of the church is to protect its constituents from the "neopagan" culture that surrounds them. To the contrary, O'Brien points out that there is no clear line between the American Catholic church and America. Since the church is hopelessly Americanized, it makes little sense to call for a simple separation of the church from the world. Such talk presumes an idealized church that has little to do with ambiguous American realities.

"I feel he may be confusing my identity crisis with someone else's identity crisis."

The application of these insights to higher education involves the very sensible suggestion that there is going to be no strengthening of the Catholic character of schools unless Catholic faculty voluntarily develop a substantive interest in the project. Neither the rhetoric of mission statements nor the mechanical method of setting percentages of faculty who are Catholic will get anywhere without an indigenous intellectual community. Moreover, maintaining theology requirements does not have much impact beyond that increasingly specialized discipline. O'Brien suggests three principal alternative strategies. First, colleges should emphasize the faith and justice dimensions of recent Catholicism. Second, they should establish programs and institutes to stimulate Catholic intellectual life. Third, they should hire faculty who reflect such commitments.

Despite the helpfulness of O'Brien's account of the problem—which is as informative as anything I have seen—there is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some ambiguity as to how he hopes to generate interest in these solutions. It seems correct that there is no way to maintain the Catholic character of schools without developing a critical mass of faculty who are excited about Catholic intellectual life. And establishing institutes and programs for encouraging committed scholarship are excellent proposals. Yet the clarity of these proposals fades as O'Brien emphasizes the virtues of Catholic Americanism. He rejects the option of Catholic "distinctiveness," which "is what got us in trouble in the first place." Religion, he says, should be understood as "the search for meaning and value." The engagement with America must always be positive, with emphases on cooperation and dialogue that promote justice and good citizenship.

O'Brien's model seems to be much like H. Richard Niebuhr's ideal of the Christian "transformation" of culture. This model O'Brien contrasts with those whom he represents as advocating separation from American culture. His outlook seems formed, like many of his generation, by the ideals of the Kennedy era. Catholics can be fully American but without giving up their religious idealism, now directed toward making America and the world better and more just places in which to live. All this is fine so far as it goes. But one has to wonder how long such ideals could sustain a recognizable Catholic identity. Without some sense of real tension between the church and the rest of culture to complement a sense of a transforming cultural mission, there will be little way to sustain the religious sensibilities that can turn these ideals into more than conventional rhetoric. O'Brien's proposals seem to follow the path taken by mainline Protestants earlier in the century, when the mission of the churches was so blended with citizenship and morality that the churches became superfluous to the mix.

The validity of O'Brien's diagnosis of the problem, however, does not depend entirely on the type of Catholic Americanism he promotes as a cure. O'Brien is entirely correct that Catholic higher education is not going to survive without voluntary support from faculty. And such voluntary support needs to be cultivated through institutes and programs for recruitment and development of faculty who regard the intersection of faith and reason as worthy of their best efforts.

As O'Brien suggests, the very word "Catholic" is part of the problem because it can mean so many things in higher education. Expanding on that point, it might be helpful to note some of the many meanings "Catholic" might have when applied to a college or university. It might mean any combination of the following: (1) a school has a relationship to a religious order; (2) it has a more direct relationship to the ecclesiastical hierarchy; (3) it is a place where the church is present via its priests who celebrate the Mass and minister to students; (4) it serves the church as the people of God; (5) it has a historical association with the Catholic community; and (6) it is a place where at least some faculty make efforts to relate certain principles of the Catholic faith to the rest of learning. While a number of these meanings are essential to the survival of Catholic colleges and universities as such, it makes little sense to sustain Catholic higher education without the last.

O'Brien recognizes the need for an academic component among the things that relate Catholicism to higher education. Yet, like so many Catholics who can remember the church before Vatican II, he seems gun-shy of anything distinctively "Catholic," since that conjures up the ghost of resurgent ecclesiastical authority. O'Brien's solution is to emphasize "American" as the dominant adjective when thinking about American Catholic scholarship.

Perhaps, however, there is a more constructive solution. Perhaps if the word "Catholic" scares people off, another word is needed for reviving the project of relating faith to learning among Catholic scholars. Perhaps Catholic schools should join with the more traditionally minded Protestant scholars who speak of promoting "Christian" scholarship. The term "Christian," of course, has even more meanings than "Catholic," but in this context it signals a tradition of recognizing that there are distinctive affirmations of traditional Christian faith that ought to have implications for some of the rest of what one believes or teaches. In affirming that ancient enterprise there is virtually nothing that

Prepare to Serve the Church of the 21st Century

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION—CANON LAW

A unique program has been developed by the internationally-renowned Theology Department of ***Duquesne University*** in conjunction with the University's prestigious Schools of Law and Business Administration, in collaboration with the canon law faculty of the ***Katholieke Universiteit Leuven***, Belgium, to train leaders and administrators for the Church of the future.

Studies will lead to a joint degree of Master's in Church Law and Administration from Duquesne University and the Licentiate in Canon Law from Leuven.

- All courses are taught in English.
- This is a two-year program, with the first semester of each year held at Duquesne and the second at Leuven.
- Options also exist for selection of a one-year Master's program in Church Law and Administration and for additional studies leading to the J.C.D. or Ph.D.

Enrollment for the inaugural class is currently being accepted for ***Fall 1995.***

For more information and a brochure contact:

Nicholas P. Cafardi, J.D., J.C.L.
Dean, School of Law
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, PA 15282

Phone (412) 396-6300

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

should separate Catholic and more traditional Protestant scholars. Yet Catholic schools seem reluctant to use the word "Christian." As one Notre Dame undergraduate explained to me, "Christian" is seen as a Protestant adjective. So it is "Catholic" scholarship or nothing. Given that choice, most Catholic academics know where they stand. The result is that, after a generation of attention at schools that otherwise are flourishing academically, little headway has been made on the project of relating faith to contemporary learning.

If "Christian" elicits too many negative images as well—as it probably does, especially when non-Christians are to be full partners in an institution—another term might be found. "Faith-related scholarship" may be the best. Although it is a bit vague, it has the advantage of recognizing that Catholic colleges and universities are diverse places. At the same time they should differ from the standardized American "diversity" in that they should encourage not only Catholics, but scholars of other faiths, to relate their faith to their learning. In any case, some positive new steps must be taken to counter the paralyzing negative reactions to Catholic distinctiveness that haunt so many intellectuals in the American Catholic community. □

KEEP RUNNING

TWO STEPS AHEAD OF THE THOUGHT POLICE
Essays
John Leo
Simon & Schuster, $22, 319 pp.

Robert G. Hoyt

First, disclosures. (1) Years ago, the author of these essays was an editor of this magazine. (2) Months ago, he offered to send the journal's editor a fax of a piece he wanted her to see, was told that *Commonweal* didn't have a fax machine, asked what the cursed things cost, sent a check. (3) Aeons (well, three decades) ago, the author wrote a column for the *National Catholic Reporter*, then edited by this reviewer; the column was often seasoned with jalapeno and had a lot to do with the paper's early success. (4) Finally, once upon a sunlit day in Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York, this same reviewer, in his role as baserunner in a softball game, rammed his stomach, which was then firm, into the hands of this same author, who was playing third base and had just taken a throw from the outfield. The runner was called out; one of the third baseman's hands got broken. It is not clear to the reviewer that this incident has been forgotten or forgiven. Knowing all this, even after learning that I disagree with from one- to two-sevenths of John Leo's opinions, the canny reader will know better than to expect a hatchet job here, and will rightly expect to get some data no other reviewer will provide.

Such as: John Leo is a natural-born columnist. I know because when he did a column for *NCR* he usually had to be reminded of the deadline on deadline day. He would say, "Right"; three or four hours later he would dictate the column by phone from New York to Kansas City. It always fitted the allotted space exactly, was reasonable, readable, and witty, needed no editing, and was sometimes devastating, as the late Cardinals Spellman of New York and McIntyre of Los Angeles had reason to know. As for style: Some people think in sentences, some in paragraphs; Leo thinks in 750- to 1,000-word chunks, each one a seamless entity. Besides which, somewhere in his brain there is a figure-of-speech machine that grinds out a steady product line of nicely turned metaphors, similes, and other tropes that divert the reader while conveying the intended message.

"What will you do when this blasted newspaper war is over?"

The jacket copy for *Two Steps* doesn't mention Leo's early newspaper experience, his work with *Commonweal* and *NCR*, or his stint as editor of the Davenport, Iowa, *Catholic Messenger*, which was already one of the country's best diocesan papers before he arrived but got more reader-friendly after he took over. From Davenport he moved to New York, first to *Commonweal*, then—over these many years—to the *New York Times*, then *Time*, now *U.S. News and World Report*. In the early legs of this journey Leo departed from his inborn moderate conservatism; on *NCR*'s opinion page his column, "Thinking It Over," usually appeared to the left of "Old and New," written by the paper's house conservative, Garry Wills. Today, insofar as either of them can be labeled, Wills is the more liberal and Leo has gone back to his roots.

Most of the pieces in *Two Steps* appeared originally in Leo's *U.S. News* column, "On Society": a bland name for a highly spiced weekly serving, but broad enough to cover its writer's range of interests. One could say that Leo is engaged in the defense of intellectual and linguistic standards, but it would be more Leonine to say that he specializes in skewering inane or fuzzy ideas and inflated, meaning-starved, euphemistic, or otherwise phony rhetoric. That may make him sound curmudgeonly, but no; he does his skewering with cool wit, not foaming-at-the-mouth rage. I suspect that at least some of his targets couldn't get through this book without laughing out loud at least once, even while bleeding.

Most of those targets are apostles or disciples of current intellectual fads and movements: victimology, rights-talk, judicialized politics (e.g., *Roe* v. *Wade*), the creation of new exonerative addictions ("Twinkies made me do it"), multiculturalism, deconstructionism, vulgarity as chic, ultra-ultra versions of feminism, agitprop art,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I am a recognized expert on journalese, the arcane lingo of reporters and pundits. To the delight of friends I can do instant translations from journalese to English. For instance, "omnipresent" means insufferable, as in "the omnipresent Yoko Ono." "Freewheeling" means crooked, "high-minded" means unworldly, and "increasingly distracted" translates as senile. "Scandal-plagued" is journalese for guilty. The term is affixed to the names of veteran suspects who have somehow escaped indictment.

What did the Washington Post *Style Section mean when it referred to a certain woman's "blushed, taut face"? Simple: too much makeup, too many facelifts. A congressman referred to as "a master of detail" is a drone.... "Racial unrest" is a race riot that the journalist failed to attend. "Well-respected" indicates a liberal who has just defected to a conservative cause: "Even the well-respected Senator Forbush supports the administration's compromise plan for moderate fire-bombing in Botswana."*

—John Leo

Two Steps Ahead of the Thought Police

sympathy due to victims; but gay-bashing happens. Yes, the addiction defense/apologia for cruel and criminal behavior is being overused; that won't be cured by calling certain addicts "drunks" or "junkies."

Major complaint: Focus. In the course of one essay attacking the substitution of "self-esteem" gimmicks for discipline and genuine teaching in ghetto schools, Leo mentions, more or less in an aside, that the teachers in these schools "are expected to cope with the devastating results of poverty, racial discrimination, crime, drugs, broken homes, and child abuse." What fascinates me about that listing is that the economic and political causes of these evils—and, more importantly, what to do about them—don't get much attention elsewhere in the book, even though, in my view, they are far more threatening to our future as a society than, say, the jejune deconstructionist babblings Leo recorded at a meeting of the Modern Language Association. Leo may be right in blaming the country's failure to resolve issues of massive inequality on a "dead-end" liberal politics that relies exclusively on appeals to white guilt. He is certainly right to call for the building of "broad, nonpolarizing, multiracial alliances." But how to go about it? Who should join? What is to be done? If that's inappropriate (Leo is a counter-puncher, not an agenda-maker), then how about more nonstuffy, nonpreachy essays on the enemies of distributive justice? He can do it; one piece in the book exposes the knowing collusion of the makers of costly gym shoes in the drug trade through their intensive marketing in the ghettos.

Verdict: Leo ends the final essay in the book, a review of a series of social studies textbooks, with this judgment: "There are things in the books I disliked and would toss if I could. But the series is a winner, a better and fairer text about America and the world than anyone [else] has yet produced, and I hope it does well." There's not much I would toss out of *Two Steps*, there's some I'd like to see added, but it's a sharper, and certainly funnier, work of social commentary than any others you're likely to see. Go read. □

A LOST GENERATION?

the lowering of academic and disciplinary standards by the feel-good school of pedagogy, and the stereotyping and demonization of such former icons as white males, the nuclear family, and Western civilization.

This choice of topics would seem to put Leo pretty far toward the conservative end of the ideological spectrum as it's now defined. In fact he is no ally of Pat Robertson, Pat Buchanan, or Newt Gingrich (who is among those neatly skewered here), and Leo does not live in the same moral universe as Rush Limbaugh. By more enduring standards, Leo is a commonsensical centrist. Sounds boring, isn't; yet on occasion his output can raise the hackles of a somewhat-knee-jerk-type liberal such as this former baserunner.

My minor complaint is that Leo sometimes gets a little mean. Yes, gay propagandists use gay-bashing to earn the

CATHOLIC LIVES/CONTEMPORARY AMERICA
The South Atlantic Quarterly, Summer 1994
Thomas J. Ferraro, special issue editor
Duke University Press, $10, 201 pp.

Mary Lee Freeman

The *South Atlantic Quarterly*'s special issue, titled *Catholic Lives/Contemporary America*, offers a decidedly lively collection of essays—not as lively, say, as a debate between Mother Angelica and Mary Daly, but lively nonetheless. A smorgasbord table of contents includes Mary Gordon on Father Chuck O'Malley, Andrew Sullivan on homosexuality, Patrick Allitt on Catholic conservative intellectuals, and Stanley Hauerwas on Notre Dame—well, who could resist? It is apparent from the wild diversity of pieces that editor Thomas Ferraro gave relatively free rein to the eclectic array of contributors, and the collection is quite happily uneven as a result. But like spoilsport adults on a roller-coaster ride, readers may find themselves unable to quash a certain uneasiness.

Recent years have witnessed the burgeoning of a new literary genre in America: a bizarre mix of nostalgia and derision that might be called *Growing Up Catholic Meets Mommie Dearest*. This collection, to its credit, does not belong to that genre. There are no schoolboy giggles or adolescent howls of rage in these essays, for the authors are, for the most part, quite a respectful bunch. Even Camille Paglia (especially Camille Paglia), whose style was once described by Christopher Thomas

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in these pages as "more or less that of a stormtrooper in jackboots," wants no part of that game. What emerges from the pages of this collection, then, is not a portrait of the church as monstrous or Catholic culture as silly, but the discomfiting portrait of Catholic culture devoid of explicitly Catholic faith. Paglia's comments on a scene from *La Dolce Vita*, though betraying either a partial viewing or a gross misunderstanding of the film, nevertheless come at the very end of the collection and in an eerie way sum it up: "The religion and the family culture are completely intertwined. You can see it there. There's a respect for the mother; respect for the family, that's your identity. And it doesn't matter whether in your heart you believe in God or not."

Considering that this is a country where the number of alienated Catholics outstrips the membership of any single denomination and where belief in God is often shoved into a private corner, it is certainly not surprising that there should exist (and flourish) expressions of Catholic culture not explicitly connected to any creedal profession of faith. Everything from the emphatic sacramentality of the tradition to the unique network of parochial schools to the pressures of assimilation has contributed to the phenomenon of a multifaceted subculture of an alienated or "lost" generation of Catholics who, as historian James Fisher puts it in his essay, "meet neither the demands of orthodoxy nor the conventions of apostasy."

Fisher, for one, is not willing to dismiss that lost generation as being implicitly irreligious and thus beyond the pale of the Catholic tradition. He contends that the lost generation "enters this tradition precisely through a fidelity, albeit often intuitive, to a profoundly orthodox doctrine, the Mystical Body of Christ.... This metaphor, with its consoling promise of self-dissolution, is the key to a profound yet scarcely acknowledged cultural style at the heart of the urban American Catholic experience."

Robert Orsi's "Mildred, Is It Fun to Be a Cripple?" is a bracing opening essay which addresses a certain permutation—perversion, perhaps—of Catholic self-abnegation in an earlier generation. The author of the much-heralded *Madonna of 115th Street* turns his attention to the "culture of suffering" in American Catholicism in the middle of this century—a time, he says, when we were "enraptured and enthralled by physical distress." Having pored through the popular devotional literature of the day, Orsi produces a litany of examples guaranteed-to-make-you-squirm as he outlines the conflicted and conflicting attitudes toward the crippled, the sick, and the suffering. Orsi argues that the "crafting of the discourse of pain was not simply a reflection of perennial Catholic theology." Rather, it was contingent upon the social circumstances of the immigrants' children who were leaving the ethnic enclaves with a crippling load of ambivalence. But once Orsi is finished sorting through the mixed motivations in all the talk about a person's joining her potentially grace-filled suffering with the sufferings of Christ, one has to wonder whether he hasn't undermined large chunks of Catholic theology along with their perverted appropriations.

Feminism and the changing face of Catholic ethics are topics central to contemporary Catholic culture, and Ferraro was astute in soliciting two pieces covering these themes. Unfortunately, Mary Jo Weaver's piece on feminists and patriarchs in the Catholic church was written before the release of *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* and is thus already dated, though it remains helpful for its assessment of how we got to where we are now. Kathy Rudy's outline of the double effect/proportionalist debate is simply reckless, containing such sweeping infelicities as this: "Proportionalism, along with the shift toward Catholic assimilation into American culture, offers women who find themselves with an unwanted pregnancy the freedom to pursue careers and other interests without being hampered by familial commitments." One would be hard pressed to find a single reputable Catholic proportionalist theologian who would agree.

The journal would be quite unbalanced without the contribution of Patrick Allitt, author of *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America: 1950–85* (Cornell). His essay "Bitter Victory" offers a thorough and objective update covering the years 1988–93. Allitt follows the heterogeneous and motley crew of Catholic conservative intellectuals as they address the fall of communism, the Gulf War, political correctness, the church, homosexuality, abortion, the secular public square, family values, and, of course, each other's failings. He wisely leaves readers to consider for themselves whether *Communio* editor David Schindler is right about the neoconservatives Michael Novak, Richard John Neuhaus, and George Weigel "espous[ing] an impoverished notion of humanity, bereft of its divine center." The territory Allitt covers is vast and the list of characters long, making this even-handed and eminently readable summary a rare and helpful guide.

But the most telling illustrations of the character of the label-resistant American Catholic culture come at the end of the collection. Novelist David Plante offers a five-page reflection, "My Parents, My Religion, and My Writing," that is a chewy enough morsel by one who, confirmed in his atheism, is yet aware that the truth to which he feels himself beholden and the God whom he worshiped as a boy are not strangers to one another. And Paglia, like Plante, believes "There's definitely a religious impulse in everything I do—even though I don't believe in God." Putting a Frank McConnellesque spin on things, she says "I feel very close to what Teresa of Avila was doing, or Saint Ignatius. There's definitely a contemplative religious thing going on...."

Yet for all the talk about Catholicism being more than a set of beliefs, one hesitates to be too optimistic about the future of a Catholic culture which seems so hesitant to confess, explicitly, both a belief in God and a belief that the ultimate goal of human striving is friendship with God. It is *New Republic* editor Andrew Sullivan who in this collection combines the understanding that the essence of Christianity is love of God and love of neighbor with a professed commitment to the Catholic church, "the eternal vessel of God's love." Sullivan's careful and heartfelt argument in "Virtually Normal," on homosexuality and Catholicism, will be familiar to those who encountered it in *America* ("I'm Here," April 5, 1993). His distinct voice and perspective make for a singular contribution to this collection. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHY YOU JUST DON'T GET IT

GENDER AND DISCOURSE
Deborah Tannen
Oxford University Press, $19.95, 203 pp.

Dennis O'Brien

"In every known society, mankind (*sic*!) has elaborated the biological division of labor into forms often very remotely related to the original biological differences...we know of no culture that has said, articulately, that there is no difference between men and women except in the way they contribute to the next generation," Margaret Mead wrote in *Male and Female*. Accepting Mead's conclusion, it should come as no surprise that males and females develop different speech cultures. Deborah Tannen's description of the American culture of male-female talk was the subject of *You Just Don't Understand* which was on the *New York Times* best-seller list for four years. *Gender and Discourse* offers the scholarly background (and prelude of articles) to the earlier work. I see no reason to quarrel with Tannen's descriptions. Males tend to use language to negotiate position in a status hierarchy, women tend to use language to achieve personal connection.

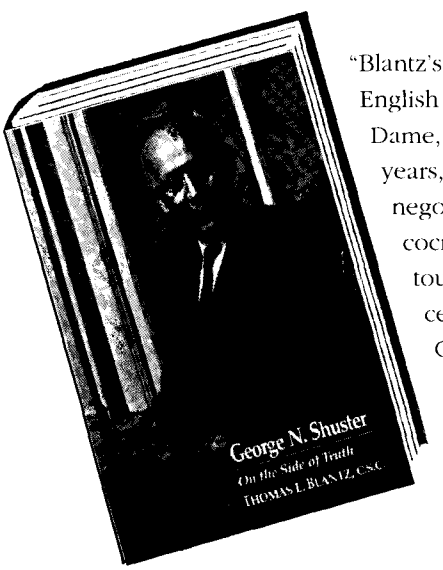
In one of the experiments detailed in *Gender and Discourse* a series of male pairs and female pairs ranging from second graders to graduate students were assigned the task of talking of something "serious" for a video taped interview. The women from second grade on head right into the subject in an engaged dialogue. The men, in contrast, have a very hard time getting onto any topic—let alone a "serious" topic—for more than a few turns. When the men finally succeed at seriousness, their "serious" is different from the women's. The graduate students hit upon marriage, but deal with it more as an abstraction than a personal concern; two tenth-grade boys get serious about one participant's "drinking problem." But where women tend to sympathize with the problems of others, the male interlocutor tells the tenth-grade drinker that it is not really a problem. Tannen generalizes from her various examples that men see conversation as competition, women see it as an instrument of intimacy. In the study of gendered pairs, the men don't even sit facing one another, while women may gaze intently at one another for the entire session.

The controversial issues all lie in the "theory" and politics—and here I also tend to agree with Tannen's commonsense approach. She is strongly committed to the cultural basis of gender styles of communication, while noting that there may well be a remote biological basis. But therein lies the political problem. *You Just Don't Understand*, as the title indicates, deals with miscommunication between men and women based on divergent cultural styles. That view annoyed certain "feminist" critics who thought that Tannen was denying the hierarchical hegemony of males. The difference between male and female is not a difference of dominance, it is just a misunderstanding of cultural tropes! Tannen is surely correct that such criticism rests on a misunderstanding. (Not all misunderstanding is gender-based!) She quotes from the earlier work: "No one could deny that men as a class dominate women in our society....And yet male domination is not the whole story....The effect of dominance is not always the result of the intention to dominate."

The question of cultural style is one thing, whether it becomes the style of some dominating class is another. In many Western societies women are downgraded as "gossips"—a sharing of personal tidbits that create a sense of shared intimacy, while males stolidly work; in Bedouin societies men

"Congratulations *Commonweal*"—

from University of Notre Dame Press, publisher of *George N. Shuster: On the Side of Truth*



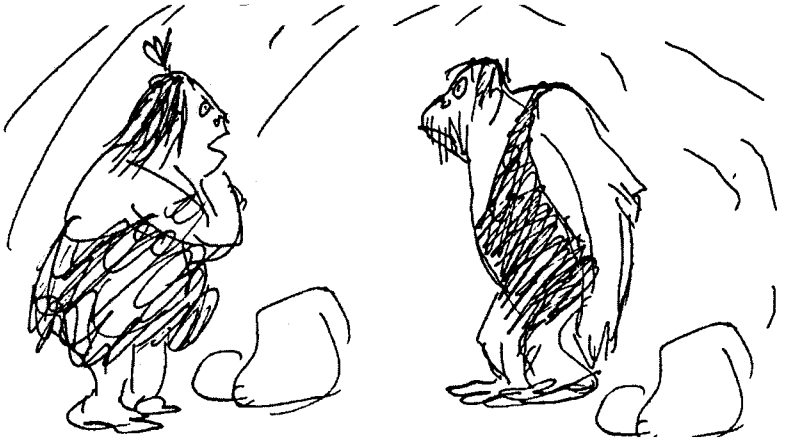
"Blantz's scholarly biography of Shuster—English professor at the University of Notre Dame, editor of *The Commonweal* for 12 years, president of Hunter College, negotiator in postwar Germany, cocreator of UNESCO—takes one on a tour of major events of the 20th century.... Shuster gave witness to Christian humanism throughout his life.... a well-constructed biography that serves as a testament to a monumental life."—*Library Journal* $34.95 cloth

At bookstores or call (800) 621-2736 (VISA or MasterCard accepted):

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS

Chicago Distribution Center, 11030 S. Langley, Chicago, IL 60628

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"Are you a man or a mouse?"

"gossip" while women do all the work. For all that, Bedouin male gossipers are probably more dominant than your average American stockbroker. On the other hand, if Tannen is correct in her analyses of American male speech patterns as "hierarchic," one could argue that the group that commands the hierarchic language will command the hierarchy. If women wish to play in the "dominance" game they will have to learn to speak "hierarchic."

I think that the most valuable single lesson from *Gender and Discourse* is that the simple polarity: hierarchy-intimacy, fails to comprehend the actual complexities of our linguistic and social interactions. The simplistic version of the male-female model: dominance-subservience, lines up opposing clusters of concepts; hierarchy denies equality which of course denies closeness and solidarity. But that clearly is not the universal case. Tannen cites an Iranian custom which has been labeled "getting the lower hand." "Taking a lower status position allows an Iranian to invoke a protector schema by which the higher-status person is obligated to do things for him or her." Closer to home, we accept an appropriate hierarchical respect of grandchild to grandparent, but the nature of the hierarchy is at the same time the basis for intimacy and solidarity. (As a friend has noted: the reason that grandparents and grandchildren get along so well is that they have a common enemy.) Tannen would replace the dichotomies of our gender debates with a multidimensional grid which would allow hierarchy to be close (Japanese) or distant (American); equality to be close (siblings) or distant (business associates).

While it is not part of Tannen's discussion, since she is a professor at Georgetown University I was tempted to speculate on how the complexities of her analysis might impact the Catholic controversies about "inclusive" (gender neutral?) language and "hierarchy." Hierarchy is easier. She is obviously correct that hierarchy is not necessarily an instrument of distance, the defeat of intimacy, as the grandparent example illustrates. The problem is not hierarchy—but what we may need is the pope as Holy Grandfather! The issue of gender neutral language, however, is somewhere between ultra-difficult and undesirable. Undesirable in the sense that a genuinely sex-neutral language might be misunderstood by everybody—not just half of the biological division of the race. Finally, if Tannen is on the right track, the difficulty of improving church language is deeper than changing a few pronouns. If male style is in the texture, then substituting Sarah for Abraham, Priscilla for Paul, may maintain miscommunication under a different name. □

REVIEWERS

GEORGE M. MARSDEN *is professor of history at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of* The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief *(Oxford).*

ROBERT G. HOYT *is senior writer of* Commonweal.

MARY LEE FREEMAN *is a graduate student in theology at Boston College.*

DENNIS O'BRIEN, *a frequent* Commonweal *contributor, is the author of* God and the New Haven Railway *(Beacon).*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

purgative, of all the nonsense talked about "free trade," "free markets," "free competition" (talk about a "century-long myth"). Though I have read more of the *ipsissima verba* of Adam Smith than of Marx, I find myself better instructed by the latter as I witness the excesses of the '80s and the shenanigans of Congress in the last session.

Part of Carlin's analysis—that it is not in the interest of the privileged classes to have society analyzed in terms of class interests, but rather to sponsor alternative analyses—is itself another way of expressing Marx's insight into the ideology of the ruling class as a cultivated false consciousness. That analysis helps explain today's demonization of Marx by reference to the afflictions imposed on humanity by his purported followers, who invoked his name while acting out their own pathologies: a development not uncommon in the history of the church.

It is highly useful to our ruling elite to spook the common herd away from the dangerous realization that capitalist financiers are engaged in the appropriation of the surplus value of labor—that is, of all but the necessities of survival. That diversion of attention serves to exert downward pressure on wages and to promote union-busting.

By its focus on the reality of class interests, David Carlin's article is a welcome corrective to Wall Street orthodoxy, even more welcome because of its novelty in a country dominated by beefmeisters like Rush Limbaugh and his Republican connections. But there is no sense in peddling the orthodox line that Marx can be dismissed because communism collapsed.

MICHAEL L. O'NEILL

Slant plus bias

San Leandro, Calif.

To the Editors: Since I'm determined to be polite in this letter, may I only say that your editorial in the issue of October 21 dismayed me. Were I not being polite I'd say it enraged me. Beginning with the dou-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ble entendre "Contract ON America" headline, this editorial is purely political and, point by point, can be refuted by conservatives.

It may have escaped you, but conservatives are Christians too. And please spare me the old "fundamentalist" line; I'm not a fundamentalist in either politics or religion. I'm an independent thinker and I don't need a slanted, biased political editorial in your magazine two weeks before the election. I get enough of this in the daily media. I didn't subscribe to *Commonweal* to hear your strong political views and reject your implied contention that if I don't vote liberal I lack compassion (and, by extension, Christianity).

EDITH MANLEY

Read it & weep

Baltimore, Md.

To the Editors: Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America," discussed in your editorial, is only twenty-four pages long; it would be a service to the American people if it were widely published. The contract tells American workers what to expect if it is enacted: tax cuts for the rich, including a 50 percent cut in capital gains taxes, at the expense of the middle and working classes, and a trillion dollars' worth of budget cuts over the next five years, most of it coming out of Social Security, Medicare, educational and environmental funding. We can't say we weren't warned.

FRANK AUGUSTINE

Science & religion

Berkeley, Calif.

To the Editors: I completely agree with Chet Raymo ["Science vs. Religion, I," September 23] that theology must take seriously the knowledge science provides, and that at times in the history of the church this has been resisted. What disturbs me about his article is its anthropocentrism. Challenging theology to find an understanding of the human "soul" that is consonant with the findings of science, he fails to see that Christianity understands God as the goodness that is behind, within, and beyond all that is.

We don't look for a God who made human beings the center of the universe and somehow distinct from it, but for the God who made "the trillions of interacting cells...the webs and flickering neurons," the God who created the wonders of DNA and the electrochemical connections that make memory possible. What we believe is that from the tiniest quark to the most majestic galaxy, all is wrought by "something other," which we can only inadequately express by the word "God." If, as Mr. Raymo says, we are "animated slime," we believe God is behind the slime as well as the animation.

On science and religion, Mr. Raymo seems to say that theology must heed science, but to reject the notion that science can be taught by theology to recognize its own limitations. It is easy to say that because science has found no "disembodied self" there is no proof for the existence of something beyond our physical selves. I am reminded of the Soviet cosmonauts who told the world that because they went up into space but didn't see God, God does

PAULIST PRESS
Extends Its Sincere
Congratulations to
COMMONWEAL
on the
Celebration
of Its
70th Anniversary

PAULIST PRESS
997 Macarthur Blvd., Mahwah, N.J. 07430
1-201-825-7300

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not exist. Theology that ignores science ends up being disembodied, closed speculation. Science without theology ends up being arrogant, directionless technology.

BR. ROBERT A. BARBATO, O.F.M. Cap.

To each its own

Boston, Mass.

To the Editors: Every Monday I read Chet Raymo's column in the *Boston Globe* with religious fervor (and sinful interest, thus dualistically). In one of these columns, if I remember it rightly, I thought Dr. Raymo had settled the science/religion debate once and for all. The column offered a tongue-in-cheek scientific interpretation of Saint-Exupéry's *Little Prince*, a reading of the tale that (as Dr. Raymo well knew) made no sense at all. He ended his column with the real meaning of the story, something to the effect that anyone who has a rose in his/her life (the kind the little prince had) understands what Saint-Exupéry's story is all about.

Thus Dr. Raymo's article on science and religion took me by surprise. The message that came to me in the article was: Religion must accommodate to science. Hence: "[T]heologians...must define 'our true selves' in a way that is compatible with the scientific way of knowing." After reading Raymo on *The Little Prince*, I had come to see that the religious world, like the poetic world of the little prince, has something to do with one's relationship with his/her rose (or his/her god[s]); it is something one participates in to express one's quest for meaning, not something one must define with one's mind in order to model the structure of things.

Another dualistic worldview! But I may still be in good company. Stephen Jay Gould, Harvard's naughty biologist/ geologist, once wrote: "Genesis and geology happen not to correspond very well. But it wouldn't matter much if they did—for we would only learn something about the limits to our storytelling, not even the whisper of a lesson about the nature and meaning of life or God." Speaking of the "rock of ages" (religion) and the "ages of rocks" (science), Gould wrote: "[I]n this tough world...I think we had better pay close attention to both." But not, I pray, and as Gould suggests, at the risk of religion answering scientific questions and science religious ones.

RICHARD J. BEAUCHESNE

The writer is professor of religious studies at Emmanuel College.

Heart & soul food

Renton, Wash.

To the Editors: Often, after reading all the material in *Commonweal*, I congratulate myself for making the time to feed the brain cells with the sustenance to be found there. Most articles, however, fail to touch my heart and feed my very soul, as did the lovely piece by Chris Anderson, "Experiencing the Tradition" [October 7]. This sensitive, very realistic depiction of the slice of life the author experienced at Mount Angel is a reminder to look for God, not in some lofty place "out there," but in the people, sights, smells we all encounter every day. I don't have the pleasure of spending time in a monastery, but I shall try to be more aware of the sacred in my own world—among the store clerks, children, neighbors, and parishioners I pass among, and particularly in the taken-for-granted faces of my husband and children. God is indeed "in the doughnut crumbs."

MAGGIE McARTHUR

THE ASSOCIATION FOR RELIGION AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE
invites applications for participants in **The 12th Coolidge Research Colloquium**, to be held at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from June 15 to July 14, 1995.

Applicants are sought from those in or out of the academy, within the Jewish and Christian faith traditions, who wish to work on an individual project related to religion and intellectual life in the context of a supportive, critically engaged, and diverse community. The Colloquium provides Fellows with room, board, and library privileges at EDS and at Harvard. Participants are required to pay a $125 registration fee and the costs of their travel.

Inquiries should be sent to : Teresa Rhodes McGee, College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, NY 10805. Application deadline is Feb. 1, 1995. Selected participants will be notified by Mar. 1, 1995.

CLASSIFIED

RATES: 90¢ per word; 12 words minimum. Advance payment required. Discounts and monthly billing available for repeat advertisers. For additional information call 212-732-0800 or write COMMONWEAL Classified, 15 Dutch St., Room 502, NYC 10038-3760.

Sabbatical

Create time and space for personal, spiritual, and theological renewal. Take advantage of far-ranging courses taught by distinguished faculty and the natural resources of the beautiful Bay Area with a semester or year-long sabbatical. Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. (800) 824-0122.

Boston College Faculty Position in Religious Education

The Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry and the Theology Department at Boston College announce a tenure-track position in **Religious Education** at the Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor level. Candidates must have a special area of competence related to the discipline of religious education and its particular articulation within the Catholic tradition, as well as its relation to other religious traditions. Demonstrated excellence in teaching and research is also required. Responsibilities include teaching graduate courses in religious education and undergraduate theology courses, advisement of doctoral and master's students, and committee membership. The ability to work as a team member of the faculty is important for this position, as is the capacity to conduct various forms of continuing education for professional religious educators and ministers in the local Catholic community. Ph.D. or Ed.D. required. Review of applications will begin on **December 16, 1994**, and continue until the position is filled. Candidates should send a letter of application, a *curriculum vitae*, and three letters of recommendation to Professor Donald Dietrich, Chairperson, Department of Theology, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167-3806. EOE/AA.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Liberal for the right reasons

WILLIAM P. CLANCY

The antipathy which the Catholic and the liberal have felt for each other is real, and its causes are basic to the philosophy of each. When Pius IX solemnly condemned "Liberalism" and denied that the church could, or should, reconcile itself with "Progress," he pronounced the church's judgment, once and for all, on that doctrinaire rationalism, secularism, and anticlericalism which lay at the base of liberalism's spirit in the nineteenth century.

As a result of this, the Catholic who associates himself with some of the struggles which are properly identified as "liberal," and who, consequently, gains a reputation as a *liberal* Catholic, is apt to find himself suspect among large numbers of his co-religionists.

The beleaguered "liberal Catholic" thus stands between two worlds which view each other with mutual distrust, and which, according to their proper lights, exclude each other. Those whose theology he shares frequently distrust him because of his politics, and those with whom he feels at home politically may doubt him because of his theology.

The church condemned a philosophy of "Liberalism." But by extending this to a blanket condemnation of liberals and everything for which they stand, Catholics condemn much that is properly their own, and in reaction espouse things which should be as repugnant to the Christian as they are to the liberal himself.

The outlook frequently described as that of the "liberal Catholic" believes that one of the great hopes for the future lies in the recovery and restoration to a Christian context of all things valuable and true. This does not imply any compromise of the faith, any trafficking with the theological enemy. It does imply, however, that on many questions of political and social order the individual Catholic may find himself more in sympathy with the viewpoint commonly associated with liberalism than with the sterile reaction to liberalism common among many of his fellow Catholics.

What is called "liberal Catholicism" is for the most part an attempt to work toward a new synthesis of the church's unchanging truths with whatever good is to be found in the modern city of man. The "liberal Catholic" is, in the best instances, the twentieth-century Catholic synthesist. He remembers the admonition of Saint Paul: "And now, brethren, all that rings true, all that commands reverence, all that makes for right, all that is pure, all that is lovely, all that is gracious in the telling; virtue and merit, wherever virtue and merit are found—let this be the argument of your thoughts."

It has been the high mission of liberalism to fight for much of what is right and true in the modern world, while those who should have aided, and even anticipated its battle, have stood aside, busy reviling "Liberalism" for its philosophical errors, and defending impossibly archaic political and social orders as a bulwark against its aberrations. "Liberalism," as its enemies point out, has indeed failed, and the future of our society will not be the easy utopia envisioned by its nineteenth-century prophets. But its failure has been as a philosophy, not as a vision, and although the future may not lie in the liberal dream, any attempt to build a civilization from which the best elements of that dream are absent is foredoomed to failure.

What the "liberal Catholic" pleads for is that Catholics should become as passionately dedicated to human dignity and freedom as the liberal has been. Liberalism may have fought its battles for the wrong reasons. The Catholic's mission should therefore be to redeem its struggle by supplying the right ones. The liberal may have advocated freedom of religion and the separation of civil and religious power because he is indifferent to absolute truth. Catholics should join him in advocating the same things because they insist on the absolute inviolability of the human conscience and the freedom of the act of faith. For the same reason they should share the liberal's aversion to censorship, suppression, and the arbitrary uses of temporal power in any effort to coerce the mind of man.

This demands no sacrifice of whatever is essential to the faith; it implies no surrender to relativism or secularism. Rather, it emphasizes what Cardinal Suhard pointed up as the church's genius for eternal renewal. In order to build what is essential so that the church may fulfil its mission in the modern world, there must exist a certain willingness to discard whatever of nonessential method and outlook has been carried over from a society which can never return. It is this affirmation, and this revaluation, always in the light of Catholic truth and subject to the guidance of the teaching church, which the "liberal Catholic" asks of his fellow Catholics in the modern world.

What he earnestly seeks is an increasing Christian charity and (in all which is nonessential) an abandonment of label-thinking. The world is not divided into the "liberals" and the orthodox, the bad guys and the good guys. Men of good will, and vision, and wisdom are not confined to "our" side. The "liberal Catholic," therefore, finally asks that the "liberal" label be dropped in the too easy categorizing of his quest. He would be more content to be thought of as a Catholic who tries to be *catholic*. □

William P. Clancy (1922-81) was a Commonweal *editor from 1952-55. This article is excerpted from the July 11, 1952 issue.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poor for the right reasons

DOROTHY DAY

The spiritual works of mercy are: to admonish the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive all injuries, and to pray for the living and the dead.

The corporal works are to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to ransom the captive, to harbor the harborless, to visit the sick, and to bury the dead.

When Peter Maurin, the founder of the Catholic Worker, talked about the necessity of practicing the works of mercy, he meant all of them, and he envisioned houses of hospitality in poor parishes in every city of the country, where these precepts of Our Lord could be put into effect. He pointed out that we have turned to state responsibility through home relief, social legislation, and Social Security, and we no longer practice personal responsibility for our brother, but are repeating the words of the first murderer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Not that our passing the buck is as crude as all that. It was a matter of social enlightenment, Holy Mother the City taking over, Holy Mother the State taking the poor to herself, gathering them to her capacious bosom studded with the jewels of the taxation of the rich and the poor alike, the subtle war between church and state meanwhile going on at all times, in the field of education, charity, the family. In the last fifteen years the all-encroaching state, as the bishops of the United States have called it, has gained the upper hand.

In our fight against such a concept of Christian charity, we have been accused of lining up with Wall Street and private enterprise, and the rich opponents of state control and taxation. But, anarchists that we are, we want to decentralize everything and delegate to smaller bodies and groups what can be done far more humanly and responsibly through mutual aid, as well as charity, through Blue Cross, Red Cross, union cooperation, parish cooperation.

Peter Maurin was very much an apostle to the world today, not only to the poor. He was a prophet with a social message and he wanted to reach the people with it. To get to the people, he pointed out it was necessary to embrace voluntary poverty, to strip yourself, which would give you the means to practice the works of mercy. To reach the man in the street you must go to the street. To reach the workers, you begin to study a philosophy of labor, and take up manual labor, useful labor, instead of white collar labor. To be the least, to be the worker, to be poor, to take the lowest place and thus be the spark which would set afire the love of men toward each other and to God (and we can only show our love for God by our love for our fellows). These were Peter's ideas, and they are indispensable for the performing of the works of mercy.

The works of mercy are a wonderful stimulus to our growth in faith as well as in love. Our faith is taxed to the utmost and so grows through this strain put upon it. It is pruned again and again and springs up bearing much fruit. For anyone starting to live literally the words of the Fathers of the church, "the bread you retain belongs to the hungry, the dress you lock up is the property of the naked," "what is superfluous for one's need is to be regarded as plunder if one retains it for one's self," there is always a trial ahead. "Our faith, more precious than gold, must be tried as though by fire." Here is a letter we received today. "I took a gentleman seemingly in need of spiritual and temporal guidance into my home on a Sunday afternoon. Let him have a nap on my bed, went through the want ads with him, made coffee and sandwiches for him, and when he left, I found my wallet had gone also."

I can only say that the saints would only bow their heads and not try to understand or judge. They received no thanks—well then, God had to repay them. They forbore to judge, and it was as though they took off their cloak besides their coat to give away. This is expecting heroic charity of course. But these things happen for our discouragement, for our testing. We are sowing the seeds of love, and we are not living in the harvest time so that we can expect a crop. We must love to the point of folly, and we are indeed fools, as our Lord himself was who died for such a one as this.

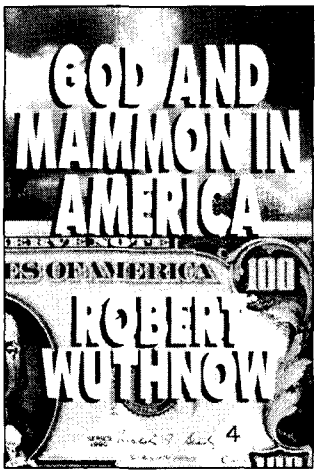
And is it to be expected that virtue and destitution should go together? No, as John Cogley has written, they are the destitute in every way, destitute of this world's goods, destitute of honor, of gratitude, of love, and they need so much, that we cannot take the works of mercy apart, and say I will do this one, or that one work of mercy. We find they all go together.

Some years ago there was an article in *Commonweal* by Georges Bernanos. He ended his article as I shall end mine: "Every particle of Christ's divine charity is today more precious for your security—for your security, I say—than all the atom bombs in all the stockpiles." It is by the works of mercy that we shall be judged. □

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) was cofounder of the Catholic Worker. This article is excerpted from the November 4, 1949, Commonweal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW FROM THE FREE PRESS



GOD AND MAMMON IN AMERICA

Robert Wuthnow, *Princeton University*

"With sensitivity and savvy, Wuthnow explores the contours of a vital spirituality that can shape new attitudes toward work and money. The agenda is urgent and Wuthnow's discussion of it is profound."
—Richard J. Mouw, President, Fuller Theological Seminary

"In this seminal work Wuthnow raises some very provocative questions for students of American culture and religious leaders. Should stir up a long overdue conversation about the relation of faith, work, and money in this country."
—Robert Wood Lynn, Bangor Theological Seminary

"In this important book, Wuthnow demonstrates both the limits and the possibilities of religion to influence attitudes toward work, greed, materialism, stewardship, economic structures. He challenges the churches and our society to reflect more deeply about the meaning of the language of simplicity, social justice, and sacrifice in the changing economic circumstances of a post-industrial society."
—John A. Coleman, S.J., Professor of Religion and Society, The Graduate Theological Union

1994 0-02-935628-8 $22.95

SHARING THE JOURNEY

Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community

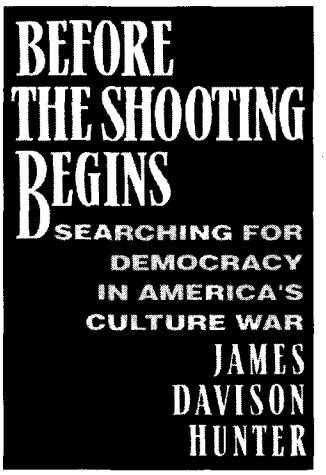
Robert Wuthnow, *Princeton University*

"Wuthnow, one of the premier scholars of American religion, has written an important book. Artfully combining social theory, poll data, case studies and cultural criticism, he carefully describes, and compellingly analyzes, the explosive rise of 'small groups' in our social and religious life. A rewarding book."
—The Washington Post Book World

1994 0-02-935625-3 $24.95

For credit card orders, call toll-free 1-800-223-2336

THE FREE PRESS
A Division of Simon & Schuster
866 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022



BEFORE THE SHOOTING BEGINS

Searching for Democracy in America's Culture War

James Davison Hunter, *University of Virginia*

"Few contemporary thinkers can match Hunter's ability to join moral urgency with democratic civility. If we are to prevent the culture wars from turning into civil war, people across the political and cultural divides need to understand his analysis and respond to his appeal."
—Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, President, Religion and Public Life

1994 0-02-915501-0 $22.95

THE MORAL SENSE

James Q. Wilson, *University of California, Los Angeles*

"The strength of this book is the recognition it gives morality as the natural product of universal human emotions...James Q. Wilson has brought poetry to sociobiology, and laid the foundations of a new science of the soul."
—The Washington Post Book World

1993 0-02-935405-6 $22.95

THE CATHOLIC ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM

Michael Novak, *American Enterprise Institute*

"With this book Michael Novak clearly establishes his right to be called the preeminent Catholic social theorist of his generation. Few authors can equal his command of the Catholic intellectual tradition."
—Jude Dougherty, Dean, Catholic University of America

1993 0-02-923235-X $24.95

—Now available in paperback—

THE AMERICAN HOUR

A Time of Reckoning and the Once and Future Role of Faith

Os Guinness

1994 0-02-913173-1 $12.95 paper

MEN ASTUTELY TRAINED

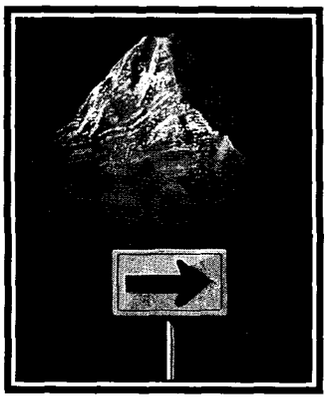
A History of the Jesuits in the American Century

Peter McDonough

1994 0-02-920528-X $14.95 paper

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What happens when, instead of trying to move the mountain, you go around it?



If you're Loyola University Chicago, the alternate route leads to success. And you build a university that teaches students to view problems from different perspectives too. Since 1870 we've been this kind of university. A Catholic university in the Jesuit tradition, with a spirituality grounded firmly in today.

A university committed to the individual student. We offer a 13 to 1 student-faculty ratio for undergraduates and assure that they study with the same faculty members that teach in our graduate programs.

A university with a nationally prominent medical center. We've opened a new cancer center that's a model for treating the patient's whole struggle with the disease — in the mind, body and spirit.

A university concerned with making a contribution to the nation. We've launched the first U.S. legal program dedicated to educating future lawyers in the protection of abused and neglected children.

A university with a network of four major campuses in Chicago and an international campus in Rome.

Loyola University Chicago, the most comprehensive of all U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities, has a different viewpoint. Because experience brings the perspective to see around problems others struggle to overcome, and find opportunity where only obstacle was first apparent.

For more information about Loyola University Chicago please call 1-800-7-LOYOLA.

THE EXPERIENCE AT WORK℠

LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY
CHICAGO

© 1994 Loyola University of Chicago

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED